Primitive Beliefs in the Northeast of Scotland

J. M. McPherson

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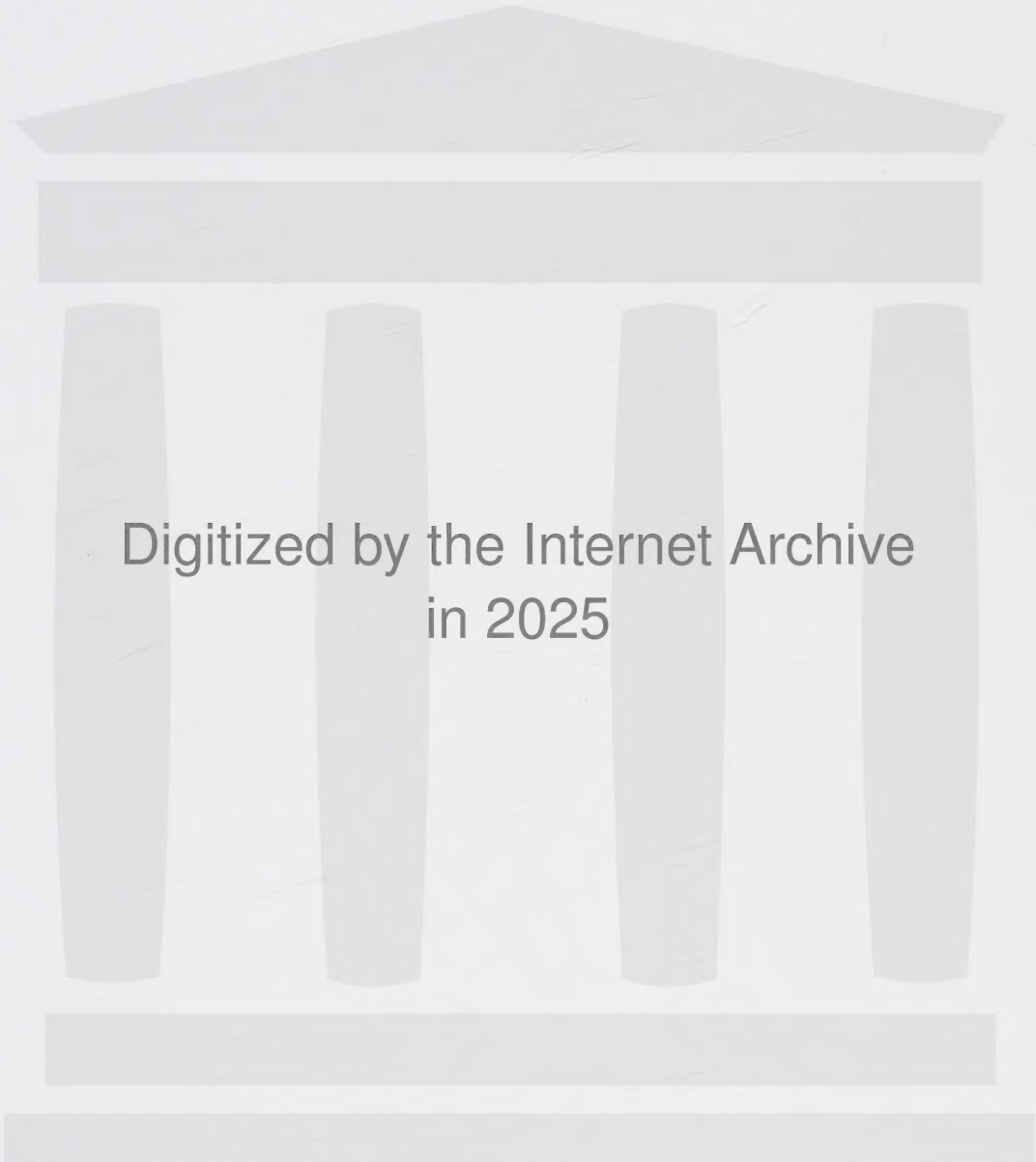
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PRIMITIVE BELIEFS IN THE NORTH-EAST OF SCOTLAND

BY

J. M. McPHERSON, B.D.

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PREFACE

THE following study is designed to give some account of the primitive beliefs and customs obtaining in the North-East of Scotland during the last three centuries. Since the publication of Dr. Walter Gregor's epoch-making "Notes on the Folk-Lore of the North-East of Scotland" nearly fifty years ago, no systematic work has been undertaken in this field. On the other hand, much valuable material has been accumulating. This embraces Dr. Gregor's own later contributions to the folk-lore periodicals and the Transactions of the Field Clubs, valuable articles in the same by the late Mr. Alex. Macdonald, Durris, sections upon ancient usages by writers of parish histories, and various books upon old traditions and surviving beliefs in particular localities.

In addition to these sources, there are the ecclesiastical, and to a lesser extent the burghal, records which provide a wealth of material. The value of these witnesses is increased by the fact that the Church did not wish to believe that these "superstitions" persisted. They constituted a reproach upon its labours. It preferred to shut its eyes to their existence, unless forced upon its attention. The references to pre-Christian modes of thought and life in the minutes of Kirk Session, Presbytery, and Synod are proof of the firm hold the old ways had upon the community. Some of the ecclesiastical records, by permission of Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries, have been examined, and my best thanks are tendered to them for the privilege. The bulk of the material, however, has been collected from the published records, particularly those issued by the Spalding Clubs, and by the late

Dr. William Cramond, the results of whose patient labours have not hitherto been fully utilised by students of religion.

Further, in this twentieth century, we seem to stand at the parting of the ways. Till the close of the nineteenth, the witch was not unknown in the rural and maritime parts of the North-East. The clyack sheaf, " the maiden," was gathered and carried home at the end of the reaping, the meal and ale was celebrated with merriment and dance. Already we have entered upon an age when many know naught of these things. It is therefore of all the greater importance to assemble and record the testimonies of those still alive who can speak from their own experience of the old beliefs, the old ways, and the old traditions.

The subject has been divided into two parts, the first dealing with beliefs that may be broadly classified as survivals of nature worship, the second with beliefs which connect with the Black Art. The distinction cannot always be clearly drawn. Particularly in the ancient rites associated with birth, marriage, and death there are many practices and underlying conceptions that have more affinity with the witch cult than with the worship of a nature spirit. *Per contra*, in the second section will be found ceremonies originally identified with the worship of fire, water, or stone, but now absorbed in the magic art.

I am indebted to the Carnegie Trust for their encouragement and help by a grant in aid of publication, for which I offer my grateful thanks.

I would also acknowledge, with gratitude, my obligation to Mr. A. G. Wallace, M.A., for much valued help in the correction of proofs.

J. M. McPHERSON.

MANSE OF RICKARTON,
STONEHAVEN.

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PART I.

NATURE WORSHIP.

CHAPTER I.

FIRE FESTIVALS.

THE Celtic year was marked by two great fire festivals, Beltane, inaugurating the summer half-year, when the cattle went out to pasture, and Samhain or Halloween, celebrating the commencement of the winter Semester, when the beasts of the field returned to the fold. This division of the year took its rise amongst a people in the pastoral stage of development. The fire festivals associated with the beginning of each period lingered long in the North-East.

BELTANE.

The latter part of the word Beltane or Belteine means fire. La Bel Teine is the fire of Bel,—probably a Celtic Deity. The date of the festival varied between the first and the third days of May. The first was probably the usual day. The second is said to have witnessed the kindling of the fires in the North-East.[1] In other districts the 3rd of May saw the bonfires blazing.

The origin of the word bonfire is dubious. Most now derive it from the burning of bones, but this seems hardly apposite in the case of the great fire festivals which provided the earliest bonfires. There is much to be said for Dr. Johnson's derivation from Fr. *bon*, good, and fire. The first part would then be the same as the Scotch bien, Orcadian büan or bane. The Orkney fisherman at sea carefully refrains from using the word church or kirk. He speaks of the heulie or büanhoos or banehoos—the good or holy house.[2] The first bonfires were holy fires. They have come down from a distant past, bearing in their name their ancient character of sanctity.

[1] Gregor, Notes on Folk-Lore, 167.

[2] Ferguson, Rambles, 165.

The Beltane fires were at first kindled upon high hills to serve a wide area. In later times they were lit on smaller eminences where the people of each hamlet or township could congregate.[1] There is evidence that at one time there were two bonfires between which the cattle were driven. Hence when it was desired to say that a man was in difficulty or peril, the expression was used, "he is between two fires or between two fires of Bel."[2] On the night preceding the celebrations, all fires in the neighbourhood were extinguished, and next morning materials for the sacred fires were assembled. On the spot chosen, a square or circular trench was cut in the ground, leaving the turf in the middle and providing a seat for the celebrants.[3] In the earliest times, the Beltane flame was raised by Needfire,[4] but latterly it was kindled in the ordinary way. While the fire was blazing, a common meal was partaken, part of which was offered to the spirit of the fire. Pennant's description of the ritual in Perthshire reveals what was no doubt a form of the celebration in the North. On the fire "they dress a large caudle of eggs, butter, oatmeal, and milk; and bring, besides the ingredients of the caudle, plenty of beer and whisky, for each of the company must contribute something. The rites begin by spilling some of the caudle on the ground by way of libation: on that, every one takes a cake of oatmeal upon which are raised nine square knobs, each dedicated to some particular being, the supposed preserver of their flocks and herds, or to some particular animal, the real destroyer of them; each person then turns his face to the fire, breaks off a knob and flinging it over his shoulder says, 'This I give to thee, preserve thou my horses,' and 'This to thee, preserve thou my sheep,' and so on. After that they use the same ceremony to the noxious animals, 'This I give thee, O fox, spare thou my lambs! This to thee, O hooded crow! This to thee, O eagle!' When the ceremony is over they dine on the caudle."[5]

This rite bears a remarkable resemblance to the ceremony that took place at the Lemuria in Rome when the father laid the ghosts in the following manner. He took black beans into his mouth, and with face averted, spat them, saying, "These I

[1] Ramsay, Scotland and Scotsmen, II, 439 ff.

[2] Cf. Martin, Description of Western Isles, 608; and Rev. Donald Macqueen, Pennant's Second Tour, 552.

[3] Pennant, Tour, 49. [4] Pp. 27 ff. [5] Pennant, Tour, 49.

send forth, with these beans I redeem myself and mine." Nine times he spoke and looked not back. The Lemuria took place from May 9th to the 13th. Here, as at Beltane, the main purpose was the warding off of evil influences.[1] At the Perthshire celebration, the proceedings ended with the May-day Feast, which was really a propitiatory drink offering and meal offering. Traces of this same ritual are to be found in the North-East. The Beltane cakes were baked and eaten within the last century. At Auchterneed, near Strathpeffer, on the 1st of May, children received each an egg and a cake. With this, they went out to the hills, made a bonfire and roasted the eggs among the ashes. The cake was baked in the morning entirely in the hand, fired before the peat-fire on the hearth, supported by a stone. No metal in any form touched it. It was called " tcharnican " (spelling phonetically).[2] Beltane cakes were also made at Keith, being baked the day before. The upper side was watered with a batter, made of whisked eggs, milk, and oatmeal.[3] Struan Michaels and Beltane bannocks were prepared in Ross-shire down to the close of the nineteenth century.[4] In Caithness, within the last seventy years, each family in the neighbourhood of Watten carried bread and cheese to the top of a hill called Heathercrow and left it there. After sunrise, the herds might take away the spoil for their own homes.[5] Here, after the fires had died out, relics of the sacrificial meal remained. Connected with the same Beltane feast was the cheese which had been specially prepared and was cut on the 1st of May. It was made, according to Dr. Gregor, from the milking of the ewes when they were shorn,[6] and was kept till the May Day celebrations. Such portion of it as was not eaten then, was stored till the 1st of August when it was consumed.

On May Day, an oatmeal bannock was baked by the goodwife for each member of the family, with an egg whipped and spread over it. About nine o'clock in the morning the goodman cut the cheese and a slice was laid on each bannock. Each member of the household had to eat his bannock before sunset. The remainder of the kebback was preserved till Lammas, when

[1] Harrison, Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion, 35.
[2] Gregor, Folk-Lore, VI (1893), 2 ff. [3] *Ibid.*
[4] Sheila Macdonald, Folk-Lore, XIV (1903), 381.
[5] Macdonald, Religion and Myth, 57.
[6] It is possible Dr. Gregor was misinformed as to the occasion of making the cheese. A sheep's milk cheese used to be made from the milk drawn from the ewes on the day after the lambs were weaned.

the whole had to be consumed before sunset.[1] After partaking of the meal, the company danced sunwise round the fire, and ran through the fields with blazing branches or wisps of straw.[2]

The Beltane fires were man's response to the attack of the powers of darkness which were believed to be abroad with peculiar force at this season. Amongst the most potent preservatives was the holy fire, the new virginal fire, derived immediately from heaven, a sure prophylactic against man's invisible foes. In later days it was believed that the witches were burned as the sacred fires were consumed. In the North-East some kept constantly tossing up the burning mass. The younger portion danced round the fire or ran through the smoke shouting " Fire ! blaze and burn the witches, Fire ! Fire ! " The ashes were scattered far and wide, scaring the powers of evil and fertilising the fields. The whole company continued till dark to run through the ashes, crying " Fire ! burn the witches." [3]

The witches were regarded as the source of every malignant influence. The fire in consuming them destroyed the powers hostile to man, purified the air, and allowed man and beast and vegetation to thrive and become fertile. The circumambulating the fields with blazing branches carried the virtue to areas a considerable distance from the bonfire.

Though the references in the church records to the May Day celebrations are more scanty than in regard to the other fire festivals, they are not wholly awanting. In 1696 a number of persons were tried before the Kirk Session of Aberdeen and censured for celebrating May Day morning.[4] In the Session records of Deskford, in Banffshire, occur an intimation and warning which were evidently called forth by the Beltane fires. In 1776, " May, the 12th, the minister preached 1 Cor. xi, 28. . . . He also warned the people of the superstitious and heathenish practices he had observed of burning fires and other idolatrous customs, which the more ignorant and weak part of the parish were addicted to on the day and evening." [5] The word before " day " is awanting, but as it is usual to find these admonitions occurring either immediately before, or immediately after,

[1] Gregor, Buchan Field Club, III, 150 f.
[2] Gregor, Notes on Folk-Lore, 167.
[3] Pennant, Tour, 291.
[4] Henderson, Banchory-Devenick, 217.
[5] Rev. G. M. Park, Deskford.

one of the forbidden days, it is fair to assume that this warning was evoked by a recent transgression on the May Day which had just passed. In the parish of Birse, Beltane was partially kept down to the middle of the eighteenth century, when the young people kindled fires on some conspicuous knoll and performed the deasoil thrice round the fire, i.e. marched thrice round the fire following the direction of the sun. They also performed some ceremonies for the preservation of their cattle and crops, so that belief in the efficacy of the May Day fires had not then died out.[1] Shaw mentions that as a boy he had been present at clear remains of this superstition,[2] and says that on " the 1st of May the herds of several farms gathered dry wood, put fire to it, and danced three times Southways about the pile." [3]

According to another writer, in 1828 the Beltane fires still blazed in Banffshire and in the Highlands, accompanied by great festivity and hilarity.[4] They would naturally continue longest amongst the hills, though the Yule fires have retained their hold by the sea coast. But as late as 1874, Arthur Laurenson states that in Shetland " still the Beltane fires are kindled and the children pass through the fire to Moloch." [5]

Halloween.

The Celtic year began with Halloweve. The new day and the new year began at even. All fires were extinguished in the home and on the farm. Then the Hallow fires were kindled, very similar to those of Beltane, but more important, as heralding the advent of a new year. From the consecrated pile, portions of fire were carried to the houses to renew the flames upon the domestic hearth. In the North-East, the celebration took place on the 11th November, that is, Halloween O.S. At each farm in Buchan, a spot, as high as possible, and not too near the steading, was chosen for the fire. Every village, too, had its Hallow blaze. Straw, furze, peats, dry potato haulms, everything combustible was gathered, and the fire lit. The lads one after the other laid themselves down on the ground close to the fire so that the smoke might roll over them. The others ran through

[1] Dinnie, Birse, 32.
[2] Shaw, History of Province, III. 145.
[3] Shaw in Pennant, Tour, 136.
[4] Laing, Donean Tourist, 282.
[5] Laurenson, P.S.A.S., X, 711 ff.

the smoke and jumped over the one recumbent.[1] There seems to be here a suggestion of human sacrifice. As at Beltane, there were parts of the country where processions around the field took place with blazing torches, doubtless kindled at the sacred fire. Down to about the middle of the nineteenth century, the Braemar highlanders made the circuit of the fields with lighted torches at Halloween, to ward off all evil spirits and to ensure fertility during the coming year. "Every member of the family was provided with a bundle of fir can'les with which to go round. The father and mother stood at the hearth and lit the splints at the peat fire. These they passed to the children and servants who trooped out, the one after the other, and proceeded to tread the bounds of their little property, going slowly round at equal distances apart and invariably with the sun. . . . When the fields had been thus circumambulated the remaining spills were thrown together in a heap and allowed to burn out."[2] By this fire ritual, the fields were both purified and fertilised. In an earlier age, the brands had been kindled at the Hallow blaze. There are traces even in the nineteenth century of a domestic purification by the sacred fire. At Petty, it was customary for the young lads wearing masks to go from house to house "bundering" at the doors and puffing smoke into the dwelling houses.[3] This ceremonial was known in Burghead in the eighties of last century as "burning the reekie mehr"—a cabbage or kail stock, hollowed and filled with kindled tow, being the mehr.[4] It was also known and practised in Sutherlandshire.[5] At Pennan, in Aberdeenshire, the last trace of the old custom in the closing years of the nineteenth century was the practice of boys making pipes out of a hollowed kail stock, filling them with tow and then proceeding to smoke.

The motive behind the Samhain fires was the same as inspired the Beltane festival. It was man's response to, and attack upon, the powers of darkness. At this season, the day was shortening, the sun's strength was diminishing, malevolent powers of every kind seemed to be abroad. In particular, the witches were holding high revelry, and their great conventions to work woe upon mankind were assembled on high hill and bleak moorland. Man resorted with cheerful confidence to the heaven-

[1] Gregor, Notes on Folk-Lore, 167 f.
[2] Alex. Macdonald, Folk-Lore, XVIII (1907), 85.
[3] Bain, The Lordship of Petty, 79.
[4] Rev. A. W. Watt, Clatt. [5] Nicholson, Golspie, 92.

given weapon of holy fire. By its divine power, he could vanquish the whole accursed brood. That the witches, at least in the later period, were regarded as the hostile power, is seen from the form of request in East Aberdeenshire, when peats were asked to make the fire. There lads went from house to house, begging a peat, commonly with the words "Ge's a peat t' burn the witches." [1] West Aberdeenshire also provides definite evidence that the witches were conceived as the enemy against whom the fires were directed. At Balmoral, during Queen Victoria's residence, there was observed at Halloween the ancient practice of burning the witch. A huge bonfire was kindled in front of the Castle, opposite the principal doorway. The clansmen were mustered, arrayed in Highland garb. At a signal, headed by a band, they marched towards the palace. The bonfire was kindled so as to be in full blaze when the procession reached it. "The interest of the promenade was centred in a trolley on which there sat the effigy of a hideous old woman or witch called the Shandy dann. Beside her couched one of the party holding her erect while the march went forward to the bagpipe's strain. As the building came in sight, the pace was quickened to a run, then a sudden halt was made a dozen yards or so from the blaze. Here, amid breathless silence, an indictment is read why this witch should be burned to ashes, and with no one to appear on her behalf—only this advocatus diaboli, paper in hand—she is condemned to the flames. With a rush and a shout and skirling of bagpipes, the sledge and its occupant are hurled topsy-turvy into the fire, while the mountaineer springs from the car at the latest safe instant. Then follow cheers and hoots of derisive laughter, as the inflammable wrappings of the Shandy dann crackle and sputter out. All the while the residents of the castle stand enjoying the curious rite, and no one there entered more heartily into it than the head of the Empire herself." [2] This is a remarkable relic. It is the action of the whole clan. They destroy the witch as the representative of the powers of darkness. "Burning the Witch" is a rite of great antiquity. It was practised in Babylonia. As her image was consumed the witch

[1] Gregor, Notes on Folk-Lore, 168.

[2] Alex. Macdonald, Scottish Notes and Queries, 2nd series, III, 90 f. Rev. Ch. Leys, Whiteness, a native of Crathie, who has often witnessed the burning of the witch there, says the Shandy dann was not the name of the witch but the joiner's waggon or trolley. Mr. Leys is right.

was believed to suffer the tortures of the fire and be gradually annihilated.[1]

The Hallow fires continued to be kindled till the end of the eighteenth century, and even later in some districts. Rev. Lachlan Shaw, writing about 1745, says: "As to the cairn fires on the eve of the 1st Nov. though I have not seen them practised, yet I am well informed that in Buchan and other places they have their Hallow fires annually kept up to this day." [2] The minister of Monquhitter, writing in 1793, says: "The Halloween fire was kindled in Buchan. Various magic ceremonies were then celebrated to counteract the influences of the witches and demons and to prognosticate to the young their success and disappointment in the matrimonial lottery. These being devoutly finished the Hallow fire was kindled and guarded by the male part of the family . . . but now the Hallow fire when kindled is attended by children only." [3] Here the ecclesiastic shuts his eyes to what he would regard as a reproach to his own influence and work. For the Rev. Dr. Pratt, a very trustworthy observer, writing in 1858, bears witness: "Hallow fires are still kindled on the Eve of All Saints by the inhabitants of Buchan and present a singular and animated spectacle—from sixty to eighty being frequently seen from one point." [4] These fires seem to have lingered longest in Buchan. When the flames had died down and the more boisterous spirits had dispersed, some were in the habit of gathering together the ashes and covering them up, "ristin' the halla fire." A reverence was paid to the ashes as all that was left of the holy fire. Then they placed on the ashes small stones to represent each member of the family. Next morning an anxious inspection was made of the ashes. If a stone were missing, the person represented would be removed by death before the next Hallow fire was kindled. An aged mother in Aberdeenshire, on searching the ashes, found one of the stones gone. She came home in sorrow and said again and again, without anyone paying much attention to her, "Annie's steenie's awa'." Before next Hallow fire, Annie had worn away to the Land o' the Leal.[5] The same practice of divination by ashes and stone was observed in Callander.[6] It is described by John

[1] Morris Jastrow, H.D.B., V, 552; and Religious Belief in Babylonia, 314.
[2] Pratt, Buchan, 21.
[3] S.A., XXI, 144 f.
[4] Pratt, Buchan, 21.
[5] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, I (1883), 26 f.
[6] S.A., XI, 621.

Ramsay as practised in his day.[1] In North Wales at the Hallowe'en bonfire, the white stone missing represented a person who would die before another Halloween.[2]

At the threshold of a new year, it was natural to peer into the future, and even when the Hallow fires ceased to burn, youth at this season continued to take the auguries as to their future lot. Though now probably extinct the following customs, most of them referred to by Burns, were observed in their youth by many still alive:—

Pulling the Kail Castoc.—Joining hand in hand, the lad and lass went out to the kailyard blindfolded and pulled the first castoc or stock they touched. They returned to the light and examined its qualities. Its size, large or small, shape, crooked or straight, and condition were prophetic of their future spouse. The taste of the castoc, sour or sweet, showed the nature of his or her disposition. If much earth adhered, that presaged a large tocher. The runts were then placed over the lintel of the door; the Christian name of the young man or woman who first entered after the kail was in position, would be the Christian name of the husband or wife.

Then, first and foremost, through the kail,
Their " stocks " maun a' be sought ance;
They steek their een, an' grape an' wale
For muckle anes, an' straught anes.
Poor hav'rel Will fell aff the drift,
An' wandered thro' the " bow-kail,"
An' pu't, for want o' better shift,
A runt, was like a sow-tail
Sae bow't that night.

Then, straught or crooked, yird or nane,
They roar an' cry a' throw'ther;
The vera wee things, toddlin', rin,
Wi' stocks out owre their shouther:
An' gif the custoc's sweet or sour,
Wi' joctelegs they taste them;
Syne coziely, aboon the door,
Wi' cannie care they've plac'd them,
To lie that night.[3]

[1] Scotland and Scotsmen, II, 437 f.
[2] Brand, Popular Antiquities, I, 389 f.
[3] Burns, Halloween.

Sowing Lint Seed.—An incantation, which demanded that the performer should leave the fireside and steal quietly out to a ploughed field, was associated with the sowing of lint seed. It was sown by a maiden over nine ridges of ploughed land, while she repeated the words :—

> Lint seed, I saw ye,
> Lint seed, I saw ye ;
> Lat him it's to be my lad
> Come aifter me, and pu' me.

On looking over her left shoulder, she saw the appearance of her future husband crossing the ridges. A lad might equally sow the lint seed in the assurance that he would behold the apparition of his future wife on that eventful evening.

Win'ing the Blue Clew.—The great quest into the future at Halloween seemed to be restricted to the problem of the future partner in life. It was only natural that a place of mystery like a kiln should play its part in lifting the veil. A girl took a male lamb's fleece, teased, carded, and span it. She wound it into a ball or clew, and on Halloween went into a kiln, seated herself on one of the kiln kebbars or rafters and threw the clew into the kiln-logie. She kept hold of one end of the thread and began to wind it, forming a new clew. Towards the end it was held tight, when she asked, "Who's that, that holds the end of my thread?" The voice answered, giving the name of the future husband. When every farm had its kiln, the practice was widely prevalent. In some districts the clew had to be of blue yarn, from which the charm got the name of "win'ing the blue clew." [1]

Wetting the Sleeve.—This was another charm widely employed. The maiden went unobserved to a south running stream or to a ford where the dead and the living crossed, and washed the sleeve of her shirt or nightdress. She returned home and placed it before the fire, confident that if she kept awake till midnight the apparition of her destined spouse would steal into the room and turn the wet sleeve.[2]

Winnowing Corn.—The party desiring the vision must go to

[1] Gregor, Buchan Field Club, III, 125 f.

[2] Macdonald, Loch Ness Side, 189; Henderson, Folk-Lore, 101 : Grant Stewart, Popular Superstitions, 232 f.

the barn secretly, open both doors as if to winnow, then take a sieve or a waicht and go three times through the form of winnowing corn. At the third time a form will pass through the barn, coming in at the windy door and going out at the other. This will be the future mate.[1]

Burning the Nuts.—Amongst the spells practised inside the house was burning the nuts. As the company sat around the fireside, they named a lad or lass to each nut as it was laid on the fire, and according to the behaviour of the nuts, so would the course and issue of the courtship be. In the North-East, when nuts were not available, peas were employed. Two peas were placed on a live peat, one representing a lad, the other a lass. If the two rested on the peat and burned together, it augured a happy marriage. If one of the peas started off from the other, it was a sure indication that there would be no union. The employment of peas may, however, have been original, for peas have virtue in themselves. They were sacred to Thor, and "the use of peas in divination concerning love matters is accounted for by the fact that they are sacred to the patron of marriage."[2]

It is worthy of note, that most of the instruments or articles employed in these charms had a magic history—the peas or nuts, the sieve, the south-running stream, the kiln, and the lint seed.[3] In parts of the North-East, the Halloween celebrations, robbed of any fearsome rites, continued till quite recent times to give picturesqueness to life, and at a dark season of the year broke in on the weary routine of the common lot with magic ceremonies, which gave a new zest to the social intercourse of youth.

Midsummer.

The midsummer festival was not confined to Celtic peoples. It was a primitive nature festival celebrated throughout Europe on the evening of the 23rd June, i.e. Midsummer Eve, or on the 24th, i.e. Midsummer Day. It marked the great turning-point of the sun's career, and was probably the most popular and most widely spread of all the fire celebrations. In the North, it was

[1] Cf. Spence, Buchan Field Club, V, 219.

[2] Kelly, Indo-European Folk-Lore, 300.

[3] On subject of Halloween, see Burns' poem, and Gregor, Notes on Folk-Lore, 84 f.

deeply rooted in the affections of the people. In city and country, the Reformed Church long struggled to suppress its observance. In Elgin Burgh, on the 30th June, 1580, the provost, baillies and councillors "ordained that no person shall make any fires on the high calsay of the borough on St. John's Even or St. Peter's Even in the month of June or ride in disguised manner within the borough on St. Nicholas' Day or St. Nicholas' Even in the month of December." [1]

In 1591 several persons within the same town were dealt with for a like offence. In July of that year, Margaret Innes confessed to "Bigging on of Midsummer fires." She had to appear two Sundays on the penitential stool, and threatened with banishment in case of a repetition of the offence.[2] Eight years later, certain persons were charged with being the "Onbiggars of baill fyiris at Midsommer Evin." [3] At Ellon Presbytery, on the 8th July, 1601, it was reported that Dame Agnes Sinclair, Countess of Errol, appeared not. She had been summoned for "the suspicious and contemptible carrying fleesis of fyre," about Mr. David Barclay's houses on Midsummer Even.[4] In the Burgh of Aberdeen even the provost was not above suspicion, for on the 3rd July, 1608, fourteen persons, including the civic head of the community and a baillie, were charged with lighting fires on the King's highway or the calsay before their doors on Midsummer's Even or Peter's Even or on both nights.[5] In both Elgin and Aberdeen, the fires were raised on the streets in front of the doors. This was not unusual elsewhere. John Stow, writing in 1598, gives a description of the Midsummer fires that continued to be kindled in London till the end of the sixteenth century: "In the months of June and July, and on the same festival days in the evenings after the sun-setting, there were usually made bonfires in the streets, every man bestowing wood or labour towards them; the wealthier sort also before the doors near to the said bonfires, would set out tables on the vigils, furnished with sweet bread and good drink, and on the festival days with meats and drinks plentifully, where unto they would invite their neighbours and passengers also to sit and be

[1] Cramond, Life in Elgin 350 Years Ago, 22.
[2] Cramond, Records of Kirk Session of Elgin, 121.
[3] *Ibid.*, 60.
[4] Mair, Narratives of Ellon Presbytery, 33.
[5] Stuart, Selections from the Records, 61.

merry with them, in great familiarity, praising God for his benefits bestowed on them. These were called bonfires as well of good amity amongst neighbours that being before at controversy, were there, by the labours of others, reconciled and made of bitter enemies loving friends: and also for the virtue that a great fire has to purge the infection of the air." [1] The Midsummer fires in the city were the occasions of good fellowship, whilst in the popular mind they also dispelled the infections of the atmosphere. It is probable that in the Scottish towns where the authorities looked with indulgent eye upon the ancient customs, the practice of spreading the table with good fare was observed. In connection with the Halloween observances, the Rev. John Bisset, one of the ministers of Aberdeen, wrote in 1745: "I never saw so many bonfires, nor was so much encouraged, as on Wednesday, by the young people, and I behoved to have one at my gate, with such a covered table as became the youth." [2] But the Reformed Church set its face to root out this "heathenish practice." At Boyndie, in 1625, the Presbytery, when it made a visitation, "anent the superstitious abuse of Banefires and Midsummer and Peter Evenes which is increased this year, ordains ane delation to be made." [3] On the 25th November, 1649, Midsummer and Halloween fires were forbidden at Slains.[4] Dingwall Presbytery on 26th June, 1655, passed a resolution that the brethren intimate to their congregations that they "desist from the superstitious abuses used on St. John's Day by burning torches through their cornes and fires in their towns, and thereafter fixing their stakes in their kail-yards." [5] Shaw, in his Appendix to Pennant's "Tour," tells us that in the middle of June farmers go round their corn with burning torches in memory of the Cerealia. In his "History of the Province," he says: "The midsummer solemnity was celebrated in honour of Ceres. They made their deas-soil about their fields of corn, with burning branches of wood in their hands to obtain a blessing on their cornes. This I have often seen, more indeed in the Lowlands than in the Highlands. On Midsummer Eve they kindle fires near their cornfields, and walk round them with

[1] Quoted by Frazer, Balder the Beautiful, I, 196.
[2] Sp. Misc., I, 353. [3] Cramond, Boyndie, 9.
[4] Scottish Notes and Queries, 1st series (1893), vii. 25.
[5] Mackay, Records of Inverness, 268.

burning torches." [1] The midsummer fires were lit in Aberdeenshire till about the middle of the eighteenth century. The minister of Monquhitter, writing in 1793, says: "The Midsummer Even fire, a relic of Druidism, was kindled in some parts of the county." [2]

As at the other sacred fires, the ritual embraced (1) a public purification by a large bonfire, sometimes lit upon an eminence in a rural district, sometimes kindled upon the street; (2) a private lustratio, by a procession with burning torches round the houses and fields and cattle. In some countries, the rolling of blazing wheels formed part of the ceremonial. There is no evidence of this in the North-East in the later observances.

Very similar were the midsummer fires which, from seventy to a hundred years ago, were kindled throughout the Orkneys on a hill or knoll. In the larger parishes, three fires might blaze: in the smaller, one sufficed. A fortnight before Midsummer Day, preparations were made for the great event. The young lads went to the hill and collected heather, which was stored in a house in the neighbourhood. Other youths took a barrow and gathered peats from the adjacent crofts or farms, till about two cartloads were heaped up. A bone was thrown in. No match was applied to light the fire. A live peat was carried from a near-by house, and thus the flame was raised. As the fire blazed up, the lads leaped through the burning mass. Besides this public fire, there was also the private lustratio. The farmer who wished a bountiful crop had a heathery torch made, sometimes spoken of as "a heather cow," and with this torch circumambulated his fields—a ceremony that was performed with the utmost gravity.

Further, to make the cattle thrive and the cows bring forth in their season, the blazing heather was carried round the animals in the byres. Sometimes there was much chasing of each other with the fiery torches round the bonfire.

Divination at Halloween is known to all, but there was also a peering into the future at midsummer in regard to a problem of perennial interest—the future spouse. The method here differs from that at Hallowmas. From the midsummer fire, the maiden carried home a half-burned peat, dipped it in the

[1] Shaw, History of Moray, 241; and Pennant, Tour, 136.
[2] S.A., XXI, 145.

" strang-bing " and laid it above the " odder stone " or lintel. Next morning it was taken down with much fear and trembling, and broken across. The colour of the fibrous material of the peat was the colour of the future husband's hair.[1]

A midsummer celebration took place in Kirkwall in front of the churchyard and cathedral within living memory. It was called a " fiery fight," but was really the survival of the ancient festival of the summer solstice. Latterly it was connected with the Royal birthday, and was held on the 24th May. For days beforehand, the youths busied themselves in collecting material for the fire. The pile was incomplete without an old boat, which was never purchased. " In the midst of the whole was a tall flagstaff. When the light was applied it became evident from the excitement on the faces of the assembled crowd that, while they were intent on watching the blaze, they had an ulterior object in view. The Up-the-Gates and the Down-the-Gates, grim and determined, muster at their respective sides of the fire. When the conflagration is at its height, it is seen that the middle tree, caught in the bight of a rope, is swaying to one side, and loud cheers rise from the successful faction. But suddenly—and very few see how it comes about—the mast is straightened by an opposite pull, and cheers, or rathers roars, go up all round. The swaying of the pole turns the bonfire into an open crater, the flame gets freer access to the butt of the stick which is now burning clearly. But it has lost its support, and falls to the lucky side. Immediately the unburned part is gripped by as many hands as there is space for and off it goes towards its goal, Burgar's Bay or the harbour. . . . The heavy end of the mast, sometimes on the ground, sometimes swinging free, goes forward in the rush, and by and by is jammed with the crowd into the narrow court above the head of the town, or plunged with a hiss into the harbour. The middle tree disposed of, back comes the crowd to the bonfire, and congregate on the weather side of it. While there is still a high circle of flame, a hero, with a rush, jumps into the centre of the crater and out at the other side. He is followed by another and another. The less agile break down the outer wall, and when the burning fragments have been kicked through the crowd of onlookers and all over the street, the revels

[1] Magnus Spence, Orkney and Shetland Miscellany, I, 180 ff.

end for a year." [1] Some of the older inhabitants of Kirkwall remember this "fiery fight." The observance, though latterly associated with a Royal birthday, is really the old midsummer bonfire, and has many resemblances to the mid-winter fires. The boat, like the Clavie barrels, is not purchased. The burning stick or tree moved between the northern and southern boundaries of the town. The leaping through the flames is a survival from the days of human sacrifice.

One of the last of the midsummer fires is that which still blazes each year on the appointed day on the hill of Cairnshee in Durris. Shorn of much of its ancient glory, it is still kindled on the evening of the 24th of June. It owes its continuance to a bequest left about the year 1790 by Alexander Hogg, a native of the parish. In terms of the trust, 10s. a year is paid to the herds round the hill to make a bonfire, and a further small sum to provide ale, cheese, and bread to those who assemble. As a lad, Hogg had herded cattle on the hills, seen the midsummer blaze, and taken part in the celebration. This would be about the middle of the eighteenth century, when the midsummer fires still illuminated the twilight of the North. The fire must be lit on the 24th of June just as the sun disappears beneath the western horizon. The height on which the fire is kindled is the highest in the district,. The sun is visible from it at the last possible moment. The herds must collect the fuel themselves. Of old, anyone not sharing in this task was doomed to have his barley full of thistles and his oats full of weeds.[2] At the present time, the fire burns low—it would never be lit but for Hogg's benefaction. There is no pushing of celebrants or cattle through the flames as in days of old. Bread and cheese, the midsummer fire feast, is discontinued. The ale in diminished bulk is distributed amongst the few lads who assemble. The importance of this fire, however, lies in the fact that here we have evidence that in the third quarter of the eighteenth century midsummer fires were burning in Kincardineshire not far from the city of Aberdeen, that the celebrations left such an impression on the minds of the peasants that one of their number, after making a competence, felt constrained to make provision in his

[1] Hossack, Kirkwall in the Orkneys, 465 ff.
[2] Alex. Macdonald, Folk-Lore, XV (1904). 105 f.

last will and testament for the continuance of the ancient ceremonial.

Yule.

Survivals of the fire festival of the winter solstice meet us in many of the Northern seaports. The "burning of the Clavie" at Burghead is usually represented as something unique. It has its distinctive features, but its essential characteristics appear at the fire celebrations in the coast towns from Kincardineshire in the South to Ultima Thule in the North. The receptacle of the fire is one distinguishing mark of the Burghead rite. This seems to have varied at the different places. As will be seen, no two are alike.

As the best known of these festivals, the ceremony at Burghead may be first described. At this ancient town, some nine miles from Elgin, the custom of "burning the Clavie" has been observed from time immemorial, and is still carried out with eager enthusiasm. On Hogmanay afternoon a band of young men, seamen and coopers, get busy building the Clavie. A tar barrel is secured, the gift of one of the merchants. At all these fire festivals the combustibles must be a gift, nothing is purchased. A herring cask and other materials are also provided. The tar barrel is sawn in two; the smaller part forms the groundwork of the Clavie which is fixed upon a salmon fisherman's stake, some six feet in length, called the "spoke." No hammer is used in driving the connecting nail, which is specially made and sent home by a smooth stone. The staves of the herring barrel are nailed at intervals of about two inches all round the lower part of the Clavie, while the other ends of the staves are firmly fixed to the spoke, an aperture being left sufficiently large to admit the head of the bearer. Then comes the filling of the Clavie with pieces of wood and tar, a place being reserved for a burning peat. As twilight descends, a youth is dispatched for the live peat. The master-builder, "the Clavie King," receives it, and places it in the opening awaiting it, where, revived by a blast from his lungs, it quickly bursts into flame. Loud cheers are raised, and then the Clavie bearer, popping his head between the staves, sets out with his blazing burden, and marches through the principal streets of the old town. Halts are made at appointed places where pieces of the burning faggots are thrown inside open

house-doors. Should the bearer stumble, it augurs ill for himself and the community, foretelling disaster to the place and certain death to the ill-fated mortal. The circuit of the town being completed, the Clavie is borne along the main street to a small hill near the northern extremity of the promontory, called the "Doorie." On the summit a freestone pillar has been built for its reception, the spoke fitting into a socket in the centre. There is nothing ancient or sacred about this pillar, which has only been the Doorie since 1809. Previous to this, a circular heap of stones used to be hastily piled up, in the centre of which the Clavie was fixed, still burning. Fresh fuel is now heaped on the Clavie, which burns more fiercely, surrounded by the cheering crowd. It used to be allowed to remain on the Doorie all night, but at the present time after burning about half an hour, it is hacked at, and amidst great excitement, the blazing mass is scattered down the side of the hill. A general scramble ensues for the burned embers, the possession of which is regarded as a token of good fortune. The crowd now disperses with their lucky charms. These are eagerly sought after, and carefully preserved as a sure protection against witches and evil spirits.[1]

This is a rite of great antiquity, but as a fire celebration it does not stand alone. Even the word Clavie is not limited to the seaside celebrations. In the session records of Inveravon, an inland parish in Banffshire, there is "ane act against clavies," subscribed in the margin of the session book as "the custome of going thorow ye cornes wt clavies discharged." The resolution of date 16th August, 1714, reads: "whereas it has been the practice of many in this parish of Inveravine to go about their folds and cornes with kindled torches of firr, superstitiously and idolatrouslie ascribing that power to the fire of sanctifieing yr corne and cattel wh is only proper and peculiar to the true and living God," and then the session proceeds to give warning of the punishment awaiting offenders.[2] The resolution and the admonition must have been evoked by a fire festival, movable or static, which had just been celebrated or was about to fall

[1] Cf. Chambers' Book of Days, II, 789-91, quoting from a description in the *Banffshire Journal;* James Macdonald, P.S.A.S. (1862), p. 360; Sir Arthur Mitchell, *ibid.*, X (1874), 660; *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 12th January, 1927; Gomme, Folk-Lore (1891), II, 19 ff.

[2] Dunnet, Invera'an, 99 f.

due. In the former case it may have been a fire purification which took place at Lammas. Or a fire festival may have been observed just before the beginning of harvest with the avowed object of warding off storms from the ripening grain, and procuring a blessing to the beasts of the field. In either case it would resemble the Roman Ambarvalia which was originally a religious procession round the land with the idea of purifying the crops from evil influences.[1] It is of importance to notice that the word Clavie is not restricted to the Burghead celebrations. Neither is the tar barrel ritual unique. For in various countries, a tar barrel on a pole figures in the midsummer celebrations.[2] Very similar, too, is the description in Breadalbane of Halloween. A bush of broom fastened to a pole was kindled, and the bearer, attended by a crowd, ran about the village. It culminated in a great bonfire.[3]

In Burghead, there used to be not only the consecration by fire of the chief streets, but also the circuit of the boats in the harbour. In 1655, the ministers of Alves, Drainie, and Duffus[4] reported that some of their seamen "superstitiously carried fyrr torches about their boats" on the last day of December. This was the gravamen of the offence and is frequently referred to. Another phrase which appears in the records is "the practice of burning torches, crossing the boats therewith." On the 19th January, 1670, the bishop and brethren were informed that the fishers in Findhorn, within the parish of Kinloss (then vacant), had observed "the heathenish idolatrous custom and practice of burning torches" upon the last day of December, being the New Year Eve.[5] It is only later that the word Clavie appears. It is employed as a synonym for torch. On the 23rd December, 1705, the minister of Drainie after sermon warned the seamen to beware of the old "Heathenish superstitious practice of carrieing of lighted Clevies or torches about their boats on New Years Even." The following year some of the elders were deputed to watch the seamen "lest they carry the

[1] Warde Fowler, The Roman Festivals, 124.

[2] Frazer, Balder the Beautiful, I, 169; Thorpe, Northern Mythology, III, 139 f.

[3] Pennant, Second Tour, 383 f.

[4] See P.S.A.S., X, 652 f., for full extracts of minutes.

[5] Cramond, Church and Parish of Alves, 41.

lighted clevies about the boats as their custom was." In the records of Duffus parish, a young lad from Burghead, along with other accomplices, was cited, on the 20th January, 1689, for having made " a burning clavie, paying a superstitious worship and blessing the boats after the old heathenish custom." On the 3rd February, Alexander Farquhar, evidently one of the accomplices, confessed he " did carry meat and drink to the boat side and did cast drink upon the boat," and John Farquhar acknowledged that he kindled a candle and went about the boats as the others did. Elspet Young was convicted of being present and carrying meat and drink to the boats. At this period it would appear as if the circuit of the boats and the offering of food and drink constituted the chief part of the ceremonial on the last night of the year. Anyone might make a bonfire, but this was " heathenish, superstitious, idolatrous " in the eyes of the Church. The ecclesiastical authorities, however, were unable entirely to root out a custom, belief in whose efficacy was deeply engrained in the fisherman's heart. As late as 1875 the Clavie was duly carried to one vessel just ready for sea, and handfuls of grain were thrown upon her deck.[1] Only when faith in its virtue had died out—this vessel appears to have been sunk—did the Clavie cease to be carried round the boats. This part of the ceremony had become tedious and was dropped. In earlier days it really constituted the important part of the fire festival, destroying demoniac influences, and ensuring prosperity to the toilers of the sea. Witches were notoriously hostile to fishermen. The fire carried to the boats purified them of all malignant influences, and enabled them to enter on the new year with every prospect of a successful season.

The " casting drink upon the boat " was manifestly a libation to the sea god. What the Burghead fishermen did on the threshold of the opening year, the Celt did on Halloweve, the beginning of his year. In Lewis, as late as 1660, there was a great Hallowtide celebration, when a representative of the community waded into the sea, and standing, cried with a loud voice, " Shony, I give you this cup of ale, hoping that you'll be so kind as to send plenty of ware for enriching our ground the coming year." He then threw the cup into the sea. The rest of the night was spent

[1] Ellen E. Guthrie, Folk-Lore Journal, VII (1889), 64.

in drinking ale, singing and dancing.[1] The ale in the Lewis corresponds to the meat and drink at the Moray Firth seaports. It may be regarded as a propitiatory sacrifice or as the survival of a sacrificial meal shared by god and man. Belief in the sea god was widespread along our shores. An old man in St. Combs, with two deaf and dumb sons, formed the crew of a little fishing boat. When the line stuck in hauling he said, "Lat this twa peer dumb men awa, as they winna cum back again." [2]

There is here evidence from the ecclesiastical records that from Findhorn to Lossiemouth, the Clavie was burned on the last night of the year. But there are traces of similar holy fires at various coast towns north and east of these seaports.

At Stonehaven, the last night of the year still witnesses the ceremonial of the "Fireballs." The balls are circular in shape and about the size of a bees' skep. They are made of combustibles and well inoculated with tar. To each ball a piece of wire is attached, by which it may be swung by the celebrants. Some sixty balls are employed and whirled about with great gusto, as the procession marches backwards and forwards along the High Street of the old town, till the balls are nearly burned out. Then the burning fragments are thrown to the sides of the streets, disinfecting the air, and scaring away all evil spirits. Though now but a Hogmanay frolic, at one time the fireballs were the means of burning the witches, and ensuring prosperity in the coming year.

Dingwall, some sixty years ago, furnished a close parallel to the Burghead ceremonies. A contributor to the *Glasgow Herald* of the 29th January, 1927, describes the "Burning of the Crate" as it took place in the county town of Ross in his youth. For some weeks before Hogmanay about twenty of the more adventurous spirits built a hut, secreted in a neighbouring wood. A large crate was purchased from a crockery dealer in the town, and duly filled with combustibles well soaked with paraffin. This was jealously guarded for three weeks, during which the musicians practised on a variety of instruments with a view to escorting the procession from the hut into the town on the last night of the year. The procession started, an old nag pulling the crate, and on arrival in the High Street the contents of the crate were fired.

[1] Martin, Western Islands, 583 f.
[2] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, III (1885), 181.

The burning mass was dragged by the horse towards the cross, the processionists meantime engaging in a riot of whooping and dancing, winding up the orgy by scattering the flaming contents of the crate when the town clock sounded the first stroke of twelve. Latterly the crate burning became a danger to property and the police had to intervene. It is referred to as "burning out the old year and lighting in the new," and as "burning the effigy." The correspondent who gave this account of the last celebration spoke of the effigy being that of the Norse Jarl Thorfin, but he also added that this practice was believed to antedate the Norse conquest. Undoubtedly we have here the burning of the witch at the close of the year. There is a great resemblance between this and the Balmoral celebration, which took place at Halloween, the eve of the Celtic New Year.

At Lerwick, there used to be a fire ceremonial on old New Year's day, similar to that which is described by Cowie as taking place on Christmas Eve. There was a procession through the streets of the town of a number of youths dragging large tar barrels filled with chips and tar, and mounted on platforms of wood. The blazing effect of this mass has been described "as truly grand and terrific." [1]

Amongst some of the Northern peoples the month beginning at Christmas was known as the "merry month," [2] for it was spent in feastings, merry-makings, bodily exercises. There are traces of this merry month in Morayshire. In the records of Elgin, reference is made to the time which is superstitiously kept from the 25th December to the last of January. "All women and lassis forbidden to haunt or resoirt thair (i.e. the Chanonry Kirk and Kirkyard) under the paynis of publict repentance at the leist during this tyme quhilk is superstitiouslie keipitt fra the xxv day of December to the last of Januar nixt thairefter." [3]

But there was a more limited celebration, which ended with a fire festival on Uphellya or Uphaliday, the last day of the Yule festivities. This was the thirteenth night of Yule and was the crowning event of the Yuletide revels.[4] There is ample evidence of its observance in Elgin and neighbourhood. In 1581-82

[1] Cowie, Shetland, 34 ff.
[2] Thorpe, Northern Mythology, I. 209.
[3] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 76.
[4] Cf. R. S. Macphail, History of Pluscardyn, 155.

John Annand, provost, and William Gibson, burgess, "become surety for Marjory Cumming, mother to the said William Gibson, that she in no time to come shall ring basons, brass nor iron morteris, nor no other material vessel upon Vphelly Even." [1] On 5th February, 1581, amongst other statutes, the borough council enact one forbidding "All making fires on the King's highway on St. John's or Peter's Even, Midsummer, Ruid or St. Nicholas' day or even, or ring bassings, bells, or any other kind of brazen vessels or metals used of old on Uphellie Even." [2] Here the Uphellya festival is put on the same footing as the other fire festivals. It was probably observed in other parishes, where the Church did not exercise the same strong hand, and was therefore compelled to let it pass unnoticed. It continued to attract the attention of the Elgin authorities, for on 14th January, 1596-97, Isobel Innes, Elgin, confessed she "ran rang a chandlar upon the nicht callit Vp(hellie)." [3]

In 1636, Alexander Dunbar in Elgin was received from the pillar for "clinking on basons through the town on Uphaly Even." [4] It seems to have been characterised by making much noise upon tin or brass vessels.

The date of the appearance of Isobel Innes before the Session, the 14th January, shows conclusively that the "Uphellie" festival was over by that date. It cannot have been held on the 29th January, twenty-four days after Christmas, O.S. In Shetland, however, the Yule Feast was prolonged till the 29th day, and this has been wrongly regarded by many as the universal date of Uphaliday.[5]

Associated with the fires at the other festivals were specially baked cakes, and Yule-tide was no exception. The "Yeel cake" and the "Yeel kebback" were well known in the North-East. When preparing the Yeel bread, a cake was baked for each member of the family, and omens of the lot of the one for whom it was baked were drawn. If the cake broke, it foreboded death. If only a small piece broke off, bad health was augured. It was customary to keep part of the Yeel cakes as long as possible.[6]

[1] Cramond, Records of Elgin, I, 164.
[2] Cramond, Records of Kirk Session, 46.
[3] *Ibid.*, I. 165.
[4] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 230.
[5] Cf. English Dialect Dictionary, s.v. Uphellya.
[6] Gregor, Notes on Folk-Lore, 157.

The last act on the closing day of the year was to "rist the fire," i.e. to cover up the live coals or peats with the ashes. The first thing on the New Year morning was to examine if there were in the ashes any mark like the shape of a human foot with the toes pointing to the door. Such a mark foreshadowed a death in the family during the year.[1] This is another point in common between the Scandinavian and Celtic rites on the closing day of their respective years.[2]

The fire festivals had this in common—they were all purificatory, designed to purge air and earth and sky of unclean and hostile influences. They thus paved the way for prosperity by land and sea. Two forms of fire appear. There is the stationary bonfire, sometimes as at Beltane the source from which the torches are lit, sometimes as at Burghead the culmination of the fire celebrations. Besides the static fire, there is the portable fire, carried by lighted torches, "Clavies," around the corn, the fields, the flocks, the herds, the houses, and the boats. In later times at least, witches are the enemies against which the sacred fire is directed. Hovering invisible in the air, at their appointed seasons, they are consumed by the sacred fires, and man is enabled to go forth to his duties in the new day, assured that prosperity will attend his labours.

[1] Gregor, Notes on Folk-Lore, 160. [2] Cf. p. 10.

CHAPTER II.

NEEDFIRE

NEEDFIRE is produced by the friction of two pieces of wood. Some have derived the word from "need" and "fire," meaning necessity fire—fire evoked by necessity, but the first part of the word is now generally connected with the German "nieten," to churn, hence churned fire—fire produced by friction. It was by needfire that fire was originally raised at all the fire festivals, though in later times common fire was employed. Apart from these regular occasions of kindling the virgin flame, the ritual of new fire was resorted to throughout Europe, and indeed amongst many primitive peoples of other continents in times of distress and calamity. Particularly was this the case when cattle were attacked by an epidemic believed to be due to the activities of demons or witches. At stated seasons, or in times of emergency, the holy fire was kindled amongst the Incas of Peru, the Indians of Mexico, various Sudanese tribes, and the Esquimaux. It was raised amongst many races of Europe, Celtic, Teutonic, and Slavonic. It was known to the ancient Greeks and Romans, and was practised by their descendants till comparatively recent times.[1] At the coronation of Sir Hari Singh the sacred fire was lighted by friction of wood of the papal tree with that of the jag tree.[2]

Needfire was the mother of the fire festivals. From it they all sprang. In itself it was a solemn religious rite accompanied with sacrifice. In its simplest form, the fire drill consists of two sticks, the one furnished with a point, the other with a hole. The point is inserted in the hole, the stick with the hole is laid flat on the ground, while the operator holds the pointed

[1] Frazer, Balder the Beautiful, I, 121 ff.
[2] See daily press 26th February, 1926.

stick upright in position and twirls it rapidly between his hands, till the friction of the two sticks against each other produces a spark and then a flame. But as the fire ritual develops, the method becomes more elaborate, and conditions are formulated in regard to successful action. The raising of the new fire constituted a great event in the life of the community. "Wherever it can be traced among people of German or Scandinavian descent," says Kelly, "the fire is always kindled by the friction of a wooden axle in the nave of a waggon wheel or in holes bored in one or two posts. In either case, the axle or roller is worked with a rope which is wound round it and pulled to and fro with the greatest possible speed by two opposite groups of able-bodied men." [1] At one time it was essential to success that new wheels, new axles, new ropes should be provided. Martin's description of the raising of the needfire revealed the great importance attached to it in the social and religious life. All fires were extinguished. Eighty-one men were employed. "The inhabitants here," he says, "did also make use of a fire called Tinegin, i.e. a forced fire or fire of necessity which they used as an antidote to the plague or murrain in cattle; and it was performed thus: all the fires in the parish were extinguished, and then eighty-one married men, being thought the necessary number for effecting this design, took two great planks of wood, and nine of them were employed by turns, who by their repeated efforts, rubbed one of the planks against the other until the heat thereof produced fire; and from this forced fire, each family is supplied with new fire which is no sooner kindled than a pot full of water is quickly set on it, and afterwards sprinkled upon the people infected with the plague or upon the cattle that have the murrain, and this they all say they find successful by experience." [2]

The employment of eighty-one married men in a rural community shows the tremendous significance attached to the fire churn, when put into operation because of some great calamity. Dr. Gregor describes a simpler method of kindling the fire. It was employed when the quarter-ill made its appearance. The "muckle wheel" was set in motion. Soon there was a spark and then a flame. From this, fires were kindled in the byres.[3]

[1] Kelly, Indo-European Folk-Lore, 48 f.
[2] Martin, Western Islands, III, 611.
[3] Gregor, Notes, 186; cf. Grant Stewart, Popular Superstitions, 215 f.

By this time the ceremony was shorn of much of its ancient glory. The powers that be had made it a penal offence.

To ensure success, various conditions had to be observed. All fires in the neighbourhood had to be extinguished before an endeavour was made to raise the new fire. Sometimes the prescribed area was all the land between two running streams. Sometimes it embraced every house within sight of the spot on which the fire chark was to be set agoing. In 1767 an effort was made to kindle the needfire on the island of Mull. For several days in succession all efforts failed. Investigation was made as to the cause, when it was found that one householder had not allowed his fires to be put out for what he regarded as a wrong purpose The master remaining obdurate, his servants were bribed; next morning, his hearth was cold and the holy flame successfully kindled.

When the fire had blazed up, each family contributed to the fire, and when it began to die away, the cattle were driven through it two or three times in a certain order. After all the cattle had passed over the smouldering embers, each householder took home a fiery brand with which to kindle the fire on the hearth.

Needfire was much resorted to in the North-East. The Church records deal only with cases that come to the ear of constituted authority. When the references are so numerous, it is clear that the practice was not only widely spread, but was firmly believed in by the great mass of the people. In the parish of Grange, in Banffshire, the fire ritual was frequently employed. In February, 1644, the minister reported to the Presbytery that there was "Neidfyre" raised within his parish for the curing of cattle.[1] The matter was considered so grave by the brethren that they referred it to the Provincial Assembly. In March, 1649, the same minister "regretted the kindling of Neidfyre" within his parish. In the following May, eight of his parishioners appeared before the Presbytery, and confessed they were present at the kindling of needfire, and said "they did nothing but as they were desired by James Duncan in Keith." James Duncan was probably "a wise man"; he was the director of operations.

The eight parishioners reported that five of their own elders

[1] Stuart, Presbytery Book of Strathbogie, 51.

were accessory to the fire-raising. All were ordered to satisfy with three days' repentance in sackcloth.[1] In the trial of John Cow, also in Grange, the minister was implicated. At the Presbytery meeting, Cow alleged that he had consulted his minister about healing his "goodis" (i.e. his cattle) by raising needfire, and asked his presence on the occasion. The account which the minister gave of the interview differed from that of his parishioner. Both agreed that resort to the cure by fire was discussed.[2]

Strathbogie was notorious for its practice of this "heathenish" custom, and the Synod of Moray in April, 1649, adopted a general rule to be applied to all offenders there—raisers of needfire in the Presbytery of Strathbogie were ordained to satisfy three days in sackcloth.[3]

But the practice was by no means confined to the valley of the Isla. In 1668, several offenders appeared before the Presbytery of Alford for "unwarrantably curing cattle by raising of Needfyr"; and the ministers of Towie and Strathdon were ordained to discharge their people from raising of needfire.[4]

In the middle of the succeeding century, the historian of Moray was an eye-witness of the fire ritual. He explains that when a contagious disease breaks out among the cattle, all fires were extinguished in the surrounding villages. "Then they force fire with a wheel, or by rubbing a piece of dry wood upon another and therewith burn juniper in the stalls of the cattle that the smoke may purify the air about them; they likewise boil juniper in water which they sprinkle upon the cattle. This done the fires in the houses are rekindled from the forced fire. All this I have seen done, and it is no doubt a Druid custom."[5]

The last known case of needfire in Caithness took place at Houstry, Dunbeath, in the year 1809 or 1810. David Gunn, a crofter, in making a kail-yard for himself, interfered with one of the fairy "brochs," with the natural result that a murrain broke out amongst the cattle in the neighbourhood. Many died. The wise men took counsel and resolved to light a "teine-eigin" as being the only course likely to stay the plague. They cut a branch from a tree in a neighbouring wood and carried it to a

[1] Stuart, Presbytery Book of Strathbogie, 104 f.
[2] *Ibid.*, 117.
[3] Extracts from Records of Synod of Moray, 96.
[4] Bell, Records of Exercise of Alford, 144.
[5] Shaw, History of Province, 248 f.

small island in the Houstry burn. Every fire was believed to be quenched, but at first there was difficulty in raising the flame. No spark came. Search was made, and it was found that a servant girl had left some live coals beneath the ashes. These were extinguished. The new fire was kindled by the friction of two pieces of wood, and from this sacred flame, all the hearths were lit anew. One of the sticks used in making the new fire was preserved down to the end of the nineteenth century.[1]

Later than this Caithness example was the raising of new fire about the middle of last century in the county of Moray, within twenty miles of Elgin. It took place in the parish of Dallas about the year 1850. A murrain having decimated the herd of a small farmer, he proceeded to kindle the needfire with all ceremony. Then having dug a pit, he sacrificed an ox therein.[2]

Sacrifice and needfire originally went hand in hand.

The great festivals, at which the flame was raised by the sacred fire, were celebrated alike by the tillers of the land and the toilers on the sea. From both, they averted evil, and to both, they ensured prosperity. It would therefore only be natural to suppose that at one period, the sea-faring population would resort to the new fire in time of emergency. The evidence that they did so, if meagre, is quite explicit. Mr. Alexander Mackay, Edinburgh, a native of Reay, Sutherlandshire, relates what happened in his boyhood. Before beginning fishing operations for the season, the crew met at night in his father's house to settle accounts for the past season and to plan operations for that just commencing. As a boy, he lay in the kitchen, listening and watching, though the men thought he was asleep. After settling up the affairs of the past year, they extinguished the fire on the hearth. Then they rubbed two pieces of wood, one against another, so rapidly as to produce a spark. The men joined in the task one after another, never allowing the friction to relax. From the flame thus kindled, they relit the kitchen fire, from which, all the men present carried away a kindling to their own homes. This raising the new fire took place in the house of the

[1] R. C. Maclagan, Folk-Lore, IX (1898), 280 f.

[2] Gordon Cumming, In the Hebrides, 194; Mitchell, Past in the Present, 274.

skipper. But other crews in the village also practised the same rite.[1]

The new fire was not raised because of any calamity or failure of the fishing. It was raised before "the beginning of operations for the season." It was not a village or parochial act. It was limited to the members of the boat's crew; the fires on their hearths were extinguished—they were relit by "kindling" from the new fire. It is possible, though the narrator would have no opportunity of knowing, that fire was also carried to the boat. If so, the ceremonial here throws light on what took place at Speymouth or Garmouth in 1664, when the "casting of fire into the nets" is banned by the Kirk Session.[2] The Speymouth fire would probably be raised in the same way, the object being identical—to secure a blessing upon the fishing about to commence.

In the case of needfire at Dallas, an ox was sacrificed when the fire was raised. But sometimes one of the animals was buried alive. In either case, it was a sacrifice offered to stay the plague. In later times, the Church regarded it as a sacrifice to the devil. Turriff Presbytery, on the 20th February, 1651, deals with the Chamberlain of Fyvie and others for trying to cure cattle of the quarter-ill. Besides the using of charms (what they were is not specified, they may have included the new fire), they had buried "ane ox quick which was a reall sacrifice to the dewell."[3] The belief was that, through the offering alive of one of the number, the spread of the disease would be checked, and the other animals affected would soon recover. On 10th October, 1658, Michael Kynoch was "delat" before the Session of Urquhart for burying "a young ox quick," because his beasts were dying, this being judged as a sort of sacrifice to Satan.[4] Here, as at Fyvie, the pre-Christian origin of the practice is indicated. In the middle of the nineteenth century, disease broke out amongst the cattle on a small farm in the parish of Resolis, in the Black Isle. The farmer made his wife go to a "canny woman" in Banffshire to seek a charm against the murrain. She made the long journey of more than

[1] Carmichael, Carmina Gadelica, II, 340 ff.
[2] Cramond, Church of Speymouth, 30.
[3] Brebner, In Turriff Presbytery.
[4] Cramond, Church and Priory of Urquhart, 41.

fifty miles and secured a remedy. The chief act to be performed was to burn to death a pig and sprinkle the ashes over the byre and other farm buildings. This was duly carried out according to instructions, except that the pig was killed before it was burned.[1] This case is instructive as showing the practice in Upper Banffshire about this period. A more terrible sacrifice was sometimes offered. One of the diseased animals was rubbed over with tar, driven forth, set on fire, and let run till it fell down and died.[2]

A little earlier than the Resolis case, a cure by the holocaust of one of the cattle took place in Orkney. The animals of a farmer were all developing disease. He consulted a wise woman who had come from the Black Isle. She said they were bewitched. To counteract the evil influence, he must take the best beast, and burn in a kiln with a roaring fire of peats. This was done with beneficent results.[3] This method of curing cattle was not confined to the North. The father of Sir James Young Simpson took part as a lad in offering up and burying a live cow as a sacrifice to the spirit of the murrain.[4] This happened in Lanarkshire in the later years of the eighteenth century.

In England as well as in Scotland the kindling of needfire was accompanied by animal sacrifice. Writing in 1866, Mr. William Henderson says a live ox was burned near Haltwhistle in Northumberland only twenty years before to stop a murrain.[5] In all these cases, an animal was sacrificed for the benefit of the rest of the herd, but an animal might be offered to secure the health of a human being. On the 6th August, 1678, the minister of Gairloch announced he had cited to the meeting of the Presbytery of Dingwall that day Hector Mackenzie in Gairloch, also his three sons and a grandson "for sacrificing a bull in a heathenish manner (i.e. with the fire ritual) in the island of St. Rufus commonly called Ellan Moury in Lochew, for the recovering of the health of Cirstane Mackenzie, spouse to the said Hector."[6] The demon that brought sickness had to be appeased by a sacrifice. A bull was offered as the supreme gift from the herd. The island was chosen for the celebration

[1] Gregor, Notes, 186.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] Ferguson, Rambler, 71 f.
[4] E. B. Simpson, Folk-Lore, 27.
[5] Henderson, Folk-Lore in Northern Counties, 149.
[6] Mackay, Records of Inverness. 338.

because it was sacred from of old, the fires to be extinguished were few, and there was less likelihood of interruption.

There is some evidence that human sacrifice was offered, especially when the recovery of a chieftain was desired. To secure so great a boon, it must be a life for a life. Many of the instances of this offering are associated with witchcraft.[1] In April, 1590, Marion McInngarrath declared there was "na remeid" for Hector Munro of Fowlis unless the principal man of his blood should suffer death for him. This pointed to his half-brother, George, who died in the following June.[2]

The "Burry Man" of the East Coast villages presents considerable resemblances to the scape-goat of antiquity. "As practised by the Greeks of Asia Minor in the sixth century before our era, the custom of the scape-goat was as follows: When a city suffered from plague, famine, or other public calamity, an ugly or deformed person was chosen to take upon himself all the evils which afflicted the community. He was brought to a suitable place, where dried figs, a barley loaf and cheese were put into his hand. These he ate, then he was beaten seven times . . . afterwards he was burned on a pyre, built of the wood of forest trees, and his ashes cast into the sea."[3] Probably the burry man at one time met a similar fate. Certainly, if not offered in sacrifice, he would be driven from the village. Down to the middle of the nineteenth century, when the herring fishing had proved a failure, and dire want faced the sea-faring community, resort was had to the burry man. A contemporary chronicler describes how in Buckie when the luck of the fishing failed, some of the fishermen dressed a cooper in a flannel shirt with burrs stuck all over it, and thus arrayed he was carried in procession through the town on a hand barrow. This was done to "bring better luck" to the fishing.[4]

Mr. J. Cranna, the historian of Fraserburgh, gives a graphic account of the appeal to the burry man in that town in the year 1864. There was a very elaborate ceremonial. The central figure was mounted on horseback, and in addition to the mass of burrs on his clothing, there was suspended head downwards, from all round the brim of his hat, a number of red herrings.

[1] See p. 278. [2] Pitcairn, Criminal Trials, I, 191 ff.
[3] Frazer, Scapegoat, 255.
[4] Choice Notes, 271 (from *Banffshire Journal*).

He was preceded by a piper, who played while the procession marched round the town. Hundreds followed the burry man, cheering and singing and showing the greatest excitement. The town's people joined with the fishermen in hoping that this ancient ceremonial would change the fortune of the fishing, but their hopes and their efforts were alike in vain. No success ensued, and the burry man was never resorted to again.[1] Dr. Gregor makes the burry man walk on foot carrying a large flag, and wearing a high-crowned hat which was hung round with herrings, suspended by the tails.[2] It seems as if the man of burrs was believed to carry away the evil influences that produced the bad fishing. By him the evil was expelled and prosperity followed. The burry man has affinities with a similar man at Marseilles. It was a custom among the Gauls that " whenever the inhabitants of Marseilles suffer from a pestilence one of the poorer class offers himself to be kept at the public expense and fed on specially pure foods. After this has been done he is decorated with sacred boughs and clad in holy garments and led about through the whole city to the accompaniment of curses in order that upon him may fall all the ills of the whole city and thus he is cast headlong down." [3]

A failure of the fishing meant a failure of the means of subsistence, which could only be due to the displeasure of supernatural beings. That anger could only be turned away by human sacrifice. Thus the desire for human blood would be appeased.[4]

But the burry man appears not only at a crisis in the fishing. At one port on the East Coast, a regular celebration took place about Lammas. It is described by Miss E. B. Simpson. In early August, on the day preceding the fair, the inhabitants of Queensferry bedecked the burry man—a lad dressed in loose garments which were covered over with burrs. They were gathered near Hopetoun and Blackness " so essential are they deemed to the maintenance of this curious ceremony, the origin and object of which are lost in antiquity, and long ago foiled the antiquarian research of even Sir Walter Scott. The custom in question can be traced back to the period of the

[1] Cranna, Fisher Life in Buchan, 12 f. [2] Gregor, Notes, 145.
[3] Harrison, Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion, 108.
[4] Cf. Westermarck, Origin and Development of Moral Ideas, I, 443.

last battle of Falkirk, for an old woman of eighty, whose dead mother was aged thirteen at the date of the battle (1746), stated that the observance has been unaltered from then till now, 1883." [1] The burry man, encased in his covering of burrs, and grasping staves adorned with flowers, marched through the town, and shouts were raised at every door as the dwellers came forth with greeting. This is a very ancient rite, partly magical, partly religious. The transference of the evil may at one period have been by magic—at another it may have been a case of the scape sacrifice. Probably the popular conception varied. In the one case it was worked by mechanical magic, in the other, it was an appeal to the Great Spirit, a sacrifice, a propitiation accompanied by prayer.[2]

[1] Simpson, Folk-Lore in Lowland Scotland, 128 f.
[2] Cf. Farnell, The Evolution of Religion, 120.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOLY WELLS.

The living water has ever been an object of worship. A spring, or a well, so beneficent to weary man, has called forth his adoration as a life-giver. At an early period, the Catholic Church forbade well worship. In the ecclesiastical canons of King Edgar, 959 A.D., "we enjoin that every priest zealously promote Christianity and totally extinguish every heathenism; and forbid well worshipings, and necromancies." [1]

The Reformed Church set its face against the pilgrimages to wells, and as early as 1579 a public statute prohibited, amongst other superstitious practices, such pilgrimages. But the task of weaning peer and peasant from recourse to the holy well in time of distress was one of the most difficult the Church had undertaken, and one of the last to yield to her strong arm. The extent of the resort to holy wells is shown by a report made to the Provincial Synod of Moray. On the 4th October, 1643, the visitors (i.e. the examiners) of the book of Kingussie found therein no censure of haunters to superstitious wells and places, the reason being that the minister alleged all were guilty.[2]

1. *Noted Wells.*—Nowhere is there better evidence of the hold which the sacred well had on the mind and heart of the people than in the case of the famous chapel well of St. Mary's in the old parish of Dundurcus, on Speyside. From time immemorial, it had been a noted haunt of pilgrims, seeking health from its waters and offering at its shrine their propitiatory gifts; and for well-nigh two hundred years after the Reformation, the well of grace attracted its votaries from distant counties, in spite of all the terrors of the Church aided by the civil power. So profound was the belief in its efficacy, and for so long did vast multitudes

[1] Ben Thorpe, Monumenta Ecclesiastica, II, 249.
[2] Cramond, Extracts from Records of Synod of Moray, 69.

resort thither from Buchan on the East to the Hebrides on the West, that it may be of interest to note some of the ecclesiastical references to the "confluences" at the well of Spey. In 1584, the first year of the Elgin Session records, in the month of September, the elders took action anent the pilgrimages to chapel and well, and in the following month, several parties not compearing were "ordainit to be incarcerat till they have fund to have satisfied the Kirk."[1] Four years later, the same Session dealt with a large number of offenders for going to the chapel well. One of them came from the parish of Moy.[2] In 1593, several persons appear before the Session for going to "the idolatrous well" and "actit themselves" never to pass in pilgrimage to the well again.[3] The matter was agitating other parochial courts, and on the 20th April, 1626, the Synod of Moray issued its counsel to ministers as to how to deal with such pilgrims. "In respect it is surmised that many people hes gain this yeir to wellis and Chappellis in the form of pilgrimage from all quarters within this province, theirfore ye Synod ordaines euerie brother to sumond a number of their parochiners to compeir ouklie befoir ye bishop and his bailzie qa hes obtained ane commission for repressing ye same, and that ye brethren of ye exerceis of Elgin begin this course the nixt oulk."[4]

There were many holy wells within the Province, but none whose name and fame was in such high repute as that of St. Mary's at Orton. In the Elgin parish records from 1627 to 1673 there are frequent references to dealings with offenders. The zeal of the Church had been quickened by a decree of the privy council in 1629, instituting an inquisition. For the purpose of restraining the superstitious resort "in pilgrimage to Chappellis and wellis which is so frequent and common in this kingdome, to the great offence of God, scandall of the Kirk and disgrace of his Majesteis government," it was ordained that commissioners cause diligent search "at all such pairts and places where this idolatrous superstition is used, and to take and apprehend all suche persons of whatsomever rank and qualitie whom they sall deprehend going in pilgrimage to Chapellis and wellis."[5] It is

[1] Cramond, Extracts from Records of Kirk Session of Elgin, 3.
[2] *Ibid.*, 5. [3] *Ibid.*, 18.
[4] Mackay, Records of Inverness, 89.
[5] Dalyell, Darker Superstitions, 94.

clear from the records of the Synod of Moray of the 4th October, 1642, that commissioners had then been appointed, and the machinery was in operation within the Province.[1] About this period, Lady Aboyne was making her annual pilgrimage to the noted well of Spey. The chapel walls were then broken down, but her ladyship used to pay her devotions there every year, as long as health permitted, even though it involved a journey of thirty miles from her home. The last two miles, this devout pilgrim traversed barefooted.[2] Many devotees of lower rank made the whole journey barefooted.

The records of Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries show how the inferior courts endeavoured to obtemper the decisions of the Synod in regard to these pilgrimages. In July, 1646, it is reported that many go from Fordyce parish to the well of Spey "superstitiouslie."[3] In September, 1648, Agnes Thomsom, Forgue, is delated to have gone to a superstitious well beyond Spey, called the Lady of Grace. On the following Sunday, she appeared and confessed she went "bairleged and bairfooted." She was ordered to come in the same manner before the pulpit, and make public declaration of her repentance for her offence.[4] In August, 1656, the minister of Rathven declared there had been "great confluences of people" at a chapel and well commonly called the Lady Chapel, in the parish of Dipple beyond Spey, on three Saturdays before Lammas, and three after, called the six "silie" Saturdays, and that the conventions were on the night and before daybreak. Two penitents said they saw great companies of people not only from Moray, but also from divers parts of this side of Spey, and some averred they came from as far as Buchan.[5] This notice is important as showing a Lammas pilgrimage, nocturnal conventions, and a muster from distant parts. At this date, there was no sign of the chapel well losing its attractive power. These great conventions, too, occurred after the Presbytery of Elgin had in the preceding May appealed to the Synod for advice as to how to restrain the superstition at the well of Spey. The Synod advised to invoke the help of the Justices of Peace.[6] But neither Justices nor Presbyters could

[1] Mackay, Records of Inverness, 89.
[2] Blakhal, A brieffe Narration, 71.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Brebner, In Turriff Presbytery.
[5] Cramond, Church and Churchyard of Rathven, 21 f.
[6] Cramond, Extracts from Records of Synod of Moray, 120.

restrain the multitudes from paying their vows at the famous well. Nine years later, the same court, conscious that all classes are involved in this "superstition," counsel that such offenders as are of more competent knowledge be censured by the bishop; where multitudes are guilty, the more considerable be selected and heavily censured at the least, and that lists of names be transmitted to the magistrates respectively concerned to put the law in action against them.[1]

In 1664, a member of the Kirk Session of Elgin was deposed from office for going to the chapel well.[2] In September of the following year, the Session of Clatt, in Aberdeenshire, dealt with three women who confessed to going "to the superstitious wall of Diple." They were ordered to pay twenty shillings and make their public repentance.[3]

On 15th May, 1667, at the visitation of Rathven by the Presbytery of Fordyce, the brethren were informed that many people out of almost all the several congregations do go to a superstitious place called the Chapel of Grace in the diocese of Moray.[4] In 1669, Elise Gardyner, in Grange, confessed her superstition in going to the chapel well for water to her husband, being heavily diseased.[5] This was possible in connection with some wells, but certain conditions had to be observed. The water must be drawn before sunrise, and must be carried unspoken to the patient. These are rather difficult conditions to observe by one who, like Elise, had a considerable journey to take. The vessel in which the water was carried must on no account touch the ground. The deputy must at the well perform the ritual acts which the sick person would have performed.

There seemed a lull in dealing with offenders during the period of change in Church government and the adjustment of internal relations, but early in the eighteenth century there are signs that the Church was to make a renewed and resolute effort to restrain the pilgrimages. In August, 1705, several persons from the parish of Alves were reported guilty of the superstitious custom of going yearly to a well at Speyside.[6] This appears to

[1] Cramond, Extracts from Records of Synod of Moray, 135.
[2] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 303.
[3] Rev. A. W. Watt, Clatt Session Records.
[4] Cramond, Church and Churchyard of Rathven, 27.
[5] Cramond, Church of Grange, 27.
[6] Cramond, Church of Alves, 70.

refer to the Lammas pilgrimage. The Synod now appealed to the Assembly and the Assembly appealed to the government.[1] It does not appear that the government interested itself in the well of Spey, for the "idolatry" continued, and in 1728 the Synod resolved to invoke the laird's assistance. Understanding that the well was in Braco's interest, they appointed three of their members "to deal with him," with a view to his suppressing the same.[2] In the following year, it was reported that Braco was to take the matter of the chapel well of Spey into his consideration. Being a canny Scot, and having no conscientious scruples in regard to these visits to the healing spring, he informed the Synod's deputy that it would be soon enough to give an answer when he knew who was to take the trouble and bear the expense of stopping it. The expense was the supreme question with Braco. In October, 1731, the Synod wrote Braco that they are to bear all reasonable charges for stopping the wells.[3] Whether Duff interposed his authority or not, the records do not say. Pilgrims still continued to frequent the sacred waters and make the well a cheerful rendezvous at appointed seasons. In 1731, a woman in Cairney, when under discipline, said, *inter alia*, that in May she rode behind the man to the chapel well of Spey. The pilgrimages had a dark side. In 1751, two persons from the same parish were rebuked for going to the chapel well on the first Sabbath of August.[4] Even after the well had ceased to trouble Church courts, it was for long the goal of many a pilgrim. "In the North-East of the parish," says the historian of Moray, "stood the Chapel of Grace and near to it the well of that name, to which multitudes even from the Western Isles do still resort, and nothing short of violence can restrain their superstitions."[5]

Shaw's description is amply justified when we think of the strenuous efforts of Church and State to restrain the multitudes from following this custom of their ancestors. In 1754, a poor woman from Ross-shire fell into the chapel well on the Lord's Day, 18th February, and was drowned. She had made her long pilgrimage to experience the well's healing virtue. She was buried at Dipple.[6] More than a century later, there is the

[1] Cramond, Extracts from Records of Synod of Moray, 186 f.
[2] *Ibid.*, 216. [3] *Ibid.*, 217, 219 f.
[4] Cairney Kirk Session Records.
[5] Shaw, History of the Province, III, 368.
[6] Cramond, Church of Speymouth, 96.

testimony of Miss Gordon Cumming. "St. Mary's well, Orton, on Speyside, still continues to attract crowds on certain days, chiefly of young folk not on serious purpose. It is not long since we noticed a girl hiding a cap of a sick baby under a stone as though shrinking from observation." [1] This is the last stage in a religious rite. The impulse to observe it lingers on in some solitary individual, who lives near nature and believes in its healing virtue. The devotee does not wish her purpose to be known, for not only has the ban of the Church been laid upon it for three centuries, but a more potent weapon has been formed against it in the ridicule of her fellows. It is now laughed at and must be gone about secretly. It is the beginning of the end, when only some unenlightened soul, untouched by the newer learning or newer faith, steals silently to the old well of virtue and deposits her offering, believing herself unseen and unknown.

A well of more local celebrity, which witnessed the same struggle between Church and people, was the well of Seggat in Auchterless. For a short period, it appears constantly in the Synod and Presbytery records. At the meeting of the Synod of Aberdeen in April, 1649, it was found that the chapel and altar of Seggat were not demolished nor yet the well filled up according to a former ordinance, and therefore the Assembly ordained the Presbytery of Turriff to visit the Kirk of Auchterless and demolish the said chapel, altar, and well. The chapel and altar might be destroyed, but the well constituted the problem. A legacy from a distant past, it was enshrined in the affections of the people. The Presbytery ordains "a Karne of stones be put upon the wall of Segget"; but the well was cleared of its stones in the night by "some evill affected persones." It was again filled up and over the site a cairn of stones built. The stones were removed by the votaries of the sacred spring. The struggle continued till 1653, when the Session refused to "waire anie more paines on it." [2] But for at least a hundred and fifty years afterwards, the well was a centre of pilgrimage to those in quest of healing, for in 1842 the minister of Auchterless writes that "within the recollection of some of the oldest inhabitants, money and other articles were deposited on Pash Sunday by those whose

[1] In the Hebrides, 213.

[2] Brebner, In Turriff Presbytery; and Stuart, Selection from the Records of Aberdeen, 221.

superstitious feelings led them to frequent the well in expectation of some benefit to be derived from drinking the water." [1]

A well which differed from the wells of Spey and Seggat was St. Wallak's well in Glass. Though a great resort of pilgrims seeking the boon of its health-giving waters, its suppliants were almost unheeded by the Church, if we are to judge by the official records. In the minutes of the Kirk Session of Glass and in the records of the Presbytery of Strathbogie there is but one reference to St. Wallak's, and even that reference may concern the Church as much as the well. At a meeting of the Presbytery at Glass, on the 7th June, 1648, it was ordained to " censure all superstition at Wallak Kirk." [2] The well is about three hundred yards below the old churchyard of Wallak Kirk. It was resorted to largely by people suffering from ophthalmia. Pilgrims left a pin in a hole which had been cut either by nature or art in a stone beside the well. Dr. Duguid (*d.* 1874) said he had seen the hole full of pins at the end of May. There was not only St. Wallak's well, but also St. Wallak's baths, whose healing virtues were also much sought after by sick folks, and especially children. The baths are a little distance up the Deveron, above the old kirk, in the direction of Beldorney. They are formed by natural cavities in the rock, three or four feet deep and supplied by a small spring coming out of a brae about twenty yards above the bath. The water trickles over the east end of the cavity, down the rock into the Deveron. The baths were noted for curing children that were dwining. Dr. Duguid says one person was brought in 1874 from the seaside and immersed in the water. When he first came to the parish, hundreds of children were dipped every year.[3] A visit to that lonely and lovely valley, a drink at its quenching spring, or immersion in its celebrated baths must surely have been followed by renewed strength and vitality in the pilgrim.

Another well of more than local repute was St. Mary's well at Ordiquhill. It stood on the farm of Auldtown in a field above the Ordiquhill and Aberchirder road. It is now covered over and drained towards the public highway. As indicating its

[1] N.S.A., Aberdeenshire, 287.

[2] Stuart, Presbytery Book of Strathbogie, 89.

[3] Mitchell, P.S.A.S., X, 606 f.; Macfarlane, Geographical Collections, I, 80.

hold on the popular mind, the General Assembly bracketed pilgrimages to this well with those to the Chapel of Grace on the Spey. Though the parishes of Rothiemay, Grange, Cairney, and Fordyce had their own wells of virtue, their parishioners were dealt with for resorting to the famous well at Ordiquhill. A Grange woman had to appear two Sabbaths before the congregation for going to this spring for water to her husband who was "heavily diseased." [1] Like the well of Spey, its healing waters could be conveyed to those unable to present themselves in person. In cases of serious illness, St. Mary's, as possessing greater potency than the local springs, would be resorted to by pilgrims from other parishes. In 1632, when the minister of Ordiquhill interfered with some visitors to the well with the view of identifying them, his manse was attacked at night, and he himself assaulted and disfigured.[2]

St. Fittack's well, near the old church of St. Fittack's, at the Bay of Nigg, south of Aberdeen, was a favourite resort of health-seekers from the burgh. Its proximity to the northern centre of trade and commerce, learning and religion, accounts for the fact that it ceased to be frequented at an earlier date than most of the other celebrated wells. From the Reformation onwards, the Church leaders made great endeavours to wean the people from making pilgrimages and leaving their offerings at the well. The Kirk Session of the burgh made it an offence to go there "in ane superstitious manner," for seeking health to themselves or their bairns. On 16th May, 1616, the Town Council decreed "If any man or woman, bairn or servant, shall be apprehended in any time coming, going on the night, either by land or sea to Dounie Saint Fittack's well or otherways wandering idly to any superstitious place, being master or mistress of a family, their sons or daughters shall pay 40s. fine, toties quoties, servants 20s., and master to be answerable for their wives, bairns, and servants." [3] On 28th November, 1630, Margaret Davidson was fined £5 for sending her nurse with "her bairn to Sanct Fiackes well and washing the bairn for the recovering of its health." [4] Down to the close of the eighteenth century, pilgrimages continued to be made. The writer of the Statistical Account on

[1] Cramond, Grange, 27. [2] Cramond, Ordiquhill, 9.
[3] Quoted by Robertson, Book of Bon-Accord, 268 f.
[4] Stuart, Selections from the Records, 110 f.

Nigg Parish says: "In the month of May, many of the lower ranks from around the adjacent city come to drink of a well in the Bay of Nigg called Downy Well . . . and proceeding a little further go over a narrow pass the Brigge of ae Hair to Downy Hill, a green island in the sea." [1] Dr. Joseph Robertson witnesses to the fact that it was still held in some repute in his day.[2]

Every parish had its holy well or wells. To this day, traces of these wells abound in the North-Eastern counties, their names derived sometimes from that of the saint associated with the locality, sometimes from a peculiarity of situation or curative power.

2. *Wells Curing Particular Diseases.*—A well might be renowned for its virtue in healing a particular disease, or it might be "a catholicon for all diseases." Of the former class are the whooping cough wells. A fountain near the Burn of Oxhill in Rathven had this special virtue, and was much resorted to by people who brought their children thither from inland parts of the country as late as 1842.[3] Here, as with children brought from the seaside to St. Wallak's well in Glass, there was the benefit accruing from a change of air, apart from any virtue that emanated from the healing spring. There is a suggestion of a well of the same curative powers in the woods of Logie, in the Garioch. It was formed by a stone with a natural hollow in it. There were several wells of this formation. Receiving and preserving water without any manifest source of supply, they would naturally at an early stage be regarded as of divine origin and possessing divine powers. The well at Logie was called the "kinker steen wall." Children who had whooping cough were sent by their parents to take a drink, at the same time depositing a pin or two.[4]

Kintore boasted of a well, on the commonty called Rushlaw, now part of the farm of Deystone. This well was noted for its efficacy in febrile complaints. It was named Dean's well, after a man of that name on whom the witch Isobel Cockie cast her cantrips, so that he was "rossin as if he had been in an oven."

[1] S.A., VII, 213.
[2] Book of Bon-Accord, 269.
[3] N.S.A., Rathven, Banffshire, 247.
[4] Beaton, Back o' Bennachie, 147.

He repaired to this well, drank of its waters, and was immediately cured.[1]

Toothache wells were said to be rare in Scotland, but at least two in the North-East were noted for their curative powers, St. Mary's well, on the east side of the Burn of Craig in Auchindoir, about a hundred yards from the old churchyard, and one in Strathspey, known as Fuaran Fiountag, the cool refreshing spring.[2] Persons suffering from a headache betook themselves as late as 1724 to the Lady's well, north-east of the house of Meldrum.[3] Of many wells it was said, as of the well near the Virgin Mary's Chapel at Stoneywood, they are "reck'ned medicinall and good for the stomach and for cleansing and curing any ulcerous tumour on any part of the body when bathed in it."[4]

Some wells were replenished by more than one spring, and had the power of curing a variety of diseases. Tobar-fuar-morie, i.e. the big cold well, situated at the foot of a steep hill in Corgarff, consists of three springs about a yard distant from each other. Each spring proved a remedy for a separate ailment—one cured the blind, the second the deaf, and the third the lame. A similar fountain of three springs is the once celebrated well of Kildinguie in Stronsay. The three mineral springs are close together, differing in strength, though of the same nature. So celebrated was this well, that sufferers crossed the sea from Denmark and Norway to secure the benefit of its waters.[5]

3. *Seasons of Visiting.*—There were special times and seasons for visiting the wells when the healing virtue of their waters was at its utmost potency. There is considerable evidence to show that the first Sunday of each quarter in the Celtic year was the proper day for the suppliant to pay his vows at the holy well. The first Sundays of November, February, May, and August were the chief days of resort to the healing fountains. Owing to the inclemency of the seasons, February and November recede into the background. Beltane and Lammas continued to see throngs of pilgrims rendering their homage at the venerated springs. To the well of Spey, the Cairney offenders made their way on the first Sunday of May. Fergan's well on the south-east side of

[1] Watt, History of Kintore, 73; Smith, History of Aberdeenshire, II, 850.

[2] Mitchell, P.S.A.S., X, 671.

[3] View of the Diocese, 559.

[4] Jervise, Epitaphs, I, 286.

[5] County Folk-Lore, III (O. and S.), 7.

Knock Fergan, in the parish of Kirkmichael, Banffshire, was a great resort. Many afflicted with skin diseases or running sores came to drink of its water and wash in it. The first Sunday in May, and Easter Sunday, were the principal days for visiting it. Pilgrimages, however, might be made till the end of September, by which season the virtue of the waters had much diminished.[1] Pasch Sunday was a favourite day for going to the well of Seggat. But May Day or the first Sunday of May was the day which saw the suffering devotees and the pleasure-seeking pilgrims in vast numbers make their way to the sacred springs. It was so at St. Wallak's well, the Craiguck well near Cromarty, St. Conon's well in Glenbervie,[2] and St. Mary's at Culloden. In anticipation of these " heathenish " practices, the Church uttered its warning. At the Provincial Assembly of Moray held at Elgin on 4th April, 1643, the Synod " in respect of the time of repairing to superstitious wells and places is drawing neare, renews the former act thereanent." [3]

The Lammas pilgrimages to the holy well seem to have partaken largely of the nature of a festal celebration. The great confluences at St. Mary's, Orton, reported by the minister of Rathven, occurred on the three Saturdays before Lammas, and the three Saturdays after Lammas. The conventions were held all night and before daybreak. These were not quiet seekers after life and health, but multitudes bent on revelry. Perhaps there are here relics of the old nature festival. It was in all probability this Lammas celebration that was referred to at the Synod of Elgin in October, 1634—its first meeting after the 1st of August—when Mr. John Stuart, moderator of the Presbytery of Aberlour " regrated unto the Synod that there were four Sundry Sabbaths wherein many of the lowse people of the Presbytery, especially of the parishes of Aberlour and Inveravon, convened at a well in Kilmaihly called Tapper Donigh, where there was nothing but abuse and profaucation of the Sabbath." [4] This confirms the suggestion that it was not a company of ailing suppliants that went to the healing wells at Lammas, but rather a concourse of the peasantry bent on celebrating, at one of the spots hallowed from of old, an ancient nature rite, in the old licentious way,

[1] Gregor, Notes, 41. [2] Kinnear, Glenbervie, 121.
[3] Cramond, Extracts from Synod of Moray, 66.
[4] *Ibid.*, 36; cf. 31.

thus bringing upon their heads the wrath of the Church. While Beltane and Lammas were the seasons of popular resort to the sacred springs, a sufferer might betake himself at any time to the wells of healing.

4. *Time of Arrival.*—The hour of arrival was usually midnight on Saturday. Sometimes the drinking and ablution had to be performed in the twilight, just before sunrise. Crowds of patients passed the night of Saturday beside a well near Drumcassie in Kincardine O'Neil that they might be present when the sun appeared on the first Sunday of May.[1] Of Fergan well, a correspondent writing in 1892, said that many of the pilgrims remained the whole night of Saturday and part of the Sabbath (1st of May), "whoever first washed in the water or drinks of it is cured of any disease or sore with which they may be troubled."[2] There was great virtue attached to securing the first draught of the waters.[3] At St. Keyne's well in Cornwall, whoever first after marriage drank of its water, would be master of the house. On one occasion a bridegroom hurried to the well immediately after the wedding service to make sure of his position in the home. He found he had been anticipated. His bride had taken a bottleful of the water with her to Church. To quote Southey's lines :—

> I hasten'd as soon as the wedding was done,
> And left my wife in the porch :
> But i' faith she had been wiser than me
> For she took a bottle to church.[4]

5. *Ritual.*—When the patient reached the sacred spring, he drank of the waters. In 1602 several persons from the parish of Elgin confessed going to the chapel of Speyside "barefoot and barelegged and drank of the well beside the Chapel, going about barefoot, and knelt down and prayed."[5] This would be the usual custom. Immersion, however, was sometimes resorted to, especially in the case of "dwining" children, or persons with sores on their bodies. At St. Fittack's well and St. Wallak's baths, children were dipped. At the latter, adults too, had most likely bathed. They did so at Craiguck.[6] Some stood in the

[1] Robertson, Parish of Kincardine O'Neil, *c.* 1725, in Macfarlane's Geographical Collections, I, 103.
[2] Mackinlay, Folk-Lore of Scottish Lochs and Springs, 278.
[3] Cf. St. John v. 46.
[4] Hope, Holy Wells, 6.
[5] Cramond, Records of Elgin, 86.
[6] N.S.A., XIV, 382.

water, some knelt beside it. There were wells at which it was necessary to lie for a time before experiencing their virtue. In most cases of immersion there was also the imbibing of water from the holy well.

Contact with the water being now over, the patient, at some of the wells, and for some diseases, applied to the affected parts the healing stones that lay around the well. These stones, resembling as nearly as possible the members of the human body, were named after the parts they represented, e.g. the " ee-stehn," the " heidstehn." When the disease was local, the patient after washing the affected part with water, rubbed it well with the stone corresponding to it.[1] Dr. Gordon, writing in 1880, says that though the water of the once famous well of Spey was then but a driblet, some " miraculous stones " still lay around.[2] Once there was a well in what is now Church Street, Inverness. On the site, excavations took place, when there were found some curious stones of a dark brown colour and of a very soft nature, in shape and size resembling the small biscuits called ginger nuts.[3] These may have been healing stones. There was virtue in the stones as well as in the water. Sir James G. Frazer tells of how the Indians of Peru employed certain stones for the increase of maize, and others for the increase of cattle. In the former case the stones resembled cobs of maize, in the latter, sheep.[4] On the principle of imitative magic, like produces like, and like heals like.

The next step was to take a rag or piece of the patient's clothing, dip it in the water of the well, rub it on the sore, and then affix the rag to a tree or bush near by. When a sacred stone had been applied to the diseased part, the rag might be attached to the tree without being dipped in the well. Dr. Duguid of Glass, speaking of St. Wallak's bath, said a rag, an old shirt, or a bib from the child's body, was hung on a tree beside the bath or thrown into it.[5] Pennant, writing of Lower Banffshire, says " they visit the well of Spey for many distempers and the well of Drachaldy for as many, offering small pieces of money and bits of rags." [6] At Montblairy in Banffshire at the

[1] Gregor, Notes, 40.
[2] Gordon, Chronicles of Keith, 60.
[3] Fraser, Northern Folk-Lore on Wells and Water, 11 f.
[4] Frazer, Magic Art, I, 162.
[5] Mitchell, P.S.A.S., X, 606 f.
[6] Pennant, Tour, 69.

end of the eighteenth century many remembered to have seen the boughs "adorned with rags of linen and woollen garments, and the well enriched with farthings and bodles, the offerings of those who came from afar to the fountain." [1] At Craiguck well, the pilgrims after drinking of the water left some threads or rags tied to a bush in the neighbourhood.[2] This attachment of rags to a tree continued to be made so long as the well was resorted to with serious intention. At the well of the Spotted Rock, near Inverness, a juniper bush was so loaded with rags and threads as to be hardly distinguishable.[3]

To some wells was attributed the power of healing animals, as well as human beings. Horse and cattle were taken to them to be relieved of their maladies and restored to health. Such was the well of Melshach, a lonely spring on the Wardhouse moors in the parish of Kennethmont. Its sanative qualities were equally efficacious in the case of man or beast. A very interesting story, giving a glimpse of the ritual at fertility wells, is told of Melshach. On the first Sunday of May, a keeper, accompanied by an expert from Aberdeen, set out for the moors to investigate grouse disease then prevalent. From a distance, they spied a group of women round the well. With the aid of a field-glass, the men watched their movements. The women, with garments fastened right up under their arms and with hands joined, were dancing in a circle round the well. An aged crone sat in their midst, and dipping a small vessel in the water, kept sprinkling them. They were married women who had proved childless and had come to the well to experience its fertilising virtues. No doubt words had been repeated, but the two observers were too far off to hear.[4] There are many marks here of a primitive rite. The Convention took place on the first Sunday of May. The women were formed in a circle with their skirts kilted up, and the old woman, the presiding priestess of the well, administered its waters by sprinkling. Sprinkling was one of the methods employed at the ancient fertility wells. But so little is known of the ritual at these wells when the object was to cure sterility, that the

[1] S.A., IV, 399. [2] S.A., XIV, 613.
[3] Fraser, Northern Folk-Lore, 17.
[4] *Aberdeen Journal*, Notes and Queries, I, 68 (1908).

account of this ceremonial at Melshach receives an added importance. The remarkable thing is that the custom lingered so late. It was observed as recently as the late sixties of last century. The well of Melshach was evidently a well of great celebrity with women, who came from far to receive the benefits it conferred.

A well of similar virtue was the Bride's well in the neighbourhood of Corgarff, at one time the favourite resort of all brides for miles around. On the evening preceding the marriage the bride visited it with her maidens, who bathed her feet and the upper part of her body with water drawn from it. This bathing ensured a family.[1]

There were two celebrated fertility wells not far from the town of Inverness. One was situated in the old churchyard of Killianan, at the mouth of the Burn of Abriachan on Loch Ness, and was known as St. Columba's Font. It was believed that it filled with water of its own accord. The other was at Arpafeelie, not far from Kessock Ferry. A stone embedded in the ground contains a circular basin, eight inches in diameter at the top and eight inches deep, tapering towards the bottom. Both were resorted to by childless women.[2]

The well of Melshach was also noted for its curative powers in regard to animals, parts of whose harness were left near the water. This depositing of the harness was regarded by the writer of the Statistical Account as an offering to the deity of the well.[3] It may have come to be so regarded by the pilgrims of that day, but it is clear that the rag or garment attached to the sacred tree and the harness left at the well were originally viewed in a different light from the coin or pin dropped into the well. The latter was a sacrificial gift to the spirit of the water. With the rag, was transferred the disease from the patient with whom it had been in contact, to the bush or tree adjoining. In the same way, the disease of horse or cattle was left at the well of Melshach with the harness laid down beside its waters. Usually the rag was affixed to the sacred tree by a thread of wool, doubtless the primitive method. Occasionally, it was attached by means of a nail. The offering of a pin and the attachment of a piece of clothing do not appear to be alternative offerings as Gomme

[1] Gregor, Folk-Lore, III (1892), 68.
[2] P.S.A.S., XVI (1882), 377, 385 ff. [3] S.A., XIII, 76.

suggests.[1] Both were offered, the pin or coin, as a propitiation to the spirit of the well, the rag as the vehicle of transfer of the disease from which the patient suffered. Sir Arthur Mitchell, a shrewd observer, writes: "It was the general custom not long ago in Scotland to drop into the water a pin or small coin or pebble with the name of the patient on it as well as to attach a bit of the clothing."[2] Of much earlier date is the evidence from Stirling, which also shows that when the patient was unable in person to go to the well, the deputy took part of the invalid's clothing and attached it to the sacred tree. Grisel Richardson, when taxed with superstitious practices, confessed "that through her great seiknes and infirmitie, she sent Margaret Tailyour to Christ's well to feache hir ane pynt of the walter thereof," and the messenger acknowledged she went "there on the first Sunday of Maij instant, and fetch to hir ane pynt of walter furth of the said well, and offerit upon ane trie ane peice of the said woman's heid-muche that send hir: and that she gave iid to the puir folk in hir name."[3] At the well it was sufficient, after going through the prescribed rites, to affix some part of the patient's clothing to the tree, which was regarded as a divine being and which would now bear the ills that have passed from the devotee.[4] The various primitive religions confirm this view of the rag offering. Among the early Semites occur holy trees hung with rags and bibs of cloth. "The rag," according to one authority, "taken from the ailing body of the suppliant and tied to one of the branches, is designed to transfer the illness of the person represented by the rags to the saint, who thus takes it away from the sufferer and bears it vicariously himself."[5] So Dr. William Van Dyck: "The suppliant who approaches a sacred tree tears off a piece of his garment and ties it to the tree, by which he commits to the well his sickness."[6] There is no reason to believe otherwise than that in Scotland, as elsewhere, the sufferer's pains and ailments were transferred to the holy tree with the rag.

A gift to the well followed the attachment of the clothing. Of old, this was an offering to the spirit inhabiting the

[1] Ethnology, 105. [2] P.S.A.S., IV (1862), 269 ff.

[3] Dalyell, Darker Superstitions, 81, quoting Stirling K.S. Register, May, June, 1617.

[4] Rhys, Celtic Folk-Lore, 358.

[5] Curtiss, Primitive Semitic Religion, 91. [6] *Ibid.*

water. On two hills in the highlands of Aberdeenshire, the spirit had to be propitiated by placing near the well a barley-meal cake marked on one side by a round figure O. If the offering was not made, some awful calamity befell the wayfarer. A woman, making the journey, neglected to leave the customary cake. She paid the penalty. She died at a spot not far from the well, where there is now a cairn. It bears the name Cairn Alshish, Elspet's Cairn. The victim on the other hill was a man. He had failed to leave the usual tribute.[1] The offering of a cake seems to suggest the old sacrificial meal. A few crumbs of bread and cheese were the offering at the Bride's well, Corgarff. A later development, as at Stirling, was the giving of money to the poor. At St. Fumack's, Botriphnie, a gift would be made to the old woman who had charge of the Saint's image. At the well of Melshach, the aged crone who officiated would be rewarded by the expectant matrons, but as a rule, and this was the earlier usage, the gift of money was deposited in the well—an offering to the presiding deity. Sometimes the offering was of gold. At Tobar-fuar-morie, in Corgarff, the guardian spirit lived under a large stone called the kettle stone, because underneath was a kettle where she stored her offerings. No cure could be expected unless gold was presented.[2] In an ancient healing well at Culsalmond, when some excavations took place, a workman discovered a gold coin of the reign of James I of Scotland, in an excellent state of preservation.[3] It must have been the gift of a wealthy pilgrim, for gold at that period was rare in the northern parts of Scotland. However devout, the great mass of the people was unspeakably poor. Silver wells were naturally more frequent. On the estate of Gask, in Turriff parish, was a silver well. From it, the farm on which it was situated took its name. In other wells, the coin was left to the free will of the suppliant. By and by, as belief in their efficacy began to fade, the offerings were diminished, till something of trifling value was reckoned sufficient. The smallest coin, a button, a pin, came to be the usual gift.

The offerings themselves were taboo. None dared touch them. Children were early taught the peril of laying hands on

[1] Gregor, Kilns in Buchan F.L., III, 152.
[2] Gregor, Folk-Lore, III (1892), 67 f.
[3] N.S.A., Aberdeenshire, 731.

the sacred gifts. Sudden death would be the lot of the offender. About the middle of the nineteenth century, scepticism was abroad. A venturesome spirit here and there would take the risk. A lad, with his companions, would remove the kettle stone from Tobar-fuar-morie and secure the gold. Armed with picks and spades, they set out and accomplished the first part of their mission. The stone was removed, but no kettle of gold was found. An old woman met the youths on their homeward way, and assured them they would all die within a few weeks, and a terrible death would be the lot of the ringleader.[1] As long as faith to make an oblation lingered amongst the older generation, the lads had the opportunity of securing pocket-money from the well offerings. At Cairney there is a well which never goes dry, on the top of the Hill of the Binwood, some 1400 feet above the sea-level. It is associated with no saint of the Church, St. Martin's well being much lower down on the glebe. This ancient well bears the name of the Gallon of Water. When full, the pool is about five feet long by three feet broad, with a depth of one foot. A man, who died not long ago was wont, as a boy at school, to race off with other boys at the dinner-hour to the top of the Binn, to see if there were any coins left by those seeking the benefit of the waters. The lads did not regard the offerings as sacrosanct.

The last act was walking three times round the well, or chapel if there were such, following the course of the sun. It seems natural to suppose that, having partaken of the healing waters, and made his offering, the pilgrim would perambulate the sacred spot. Martin says, "They move thrice round the well, proceeding sunwise from east to west, and so on. This is done after drinking of the water."[2] Some engaged in prayer, some might repeat a magical form of words, but with the final perambulation of the well, the devotions of the pilgrims were over. They might either return silently home or, if at a festival time, join with the merry bands celebrating the sacred season.

6. *Personality of Well.*—To primitive man, water instinct with life and energy and bestowing fertility upon the fields, was endowed with supernatural powers. "The fountain is treated as a living thing, those properties of its waters which we call natural are regarded as manifestations of divine life, and the source itself

[1] Gregor, Folk-Lore, III (1892), 67 f.
[2] History of the Western Isles, 619.

is honoured as a divine being. I had almost said a divine animal." [1] This is the verdict in regard to the Semitic wells, and it is equally true of those in Scotland. At an early period, our wells were regarded as the manifestation of a spirit, call it demon or god. The living water was the expression of a living creature endowed with demoniac life and energy. It was wisdom therefore to propitiate it by gifts.

This attribution of personal life to the well is revealed in the traditions associated with many fountains. The well of Aulthash is situated some three miles south of Fochabers. Originally springing from the hill above the present farm offices, an evil disposed man one day committed on the well an act of gross indignity. Grievously offended, it was found next morning to have changed its position and was swelling forth in full strength at the bottom of the brae in the steep ravine where it now is.[2] Another well deity on being insulted removed its well to Keppoch at Leys, near Inverness.[3] And prompted by a nobler motive, a well has been known to transport itself across the vast ocean. In the district of Strathdearn, an old man was unwilling to leave his cottage and the spring he loved, to go and join the rest of his family in the prairies of Canada. At last he was persuaded to move, and what was his surprise on reaching the new country to find his dear old friend bubbling forth beside his new home? Near by was also a large white stone, which stood beside it in the old land and on which he used to sit reading his Bible.[4]

If the spirit of the well were outraged, it might cease to give forth healing virtue. A farmer from Letterewe, whose favourite dog had gone mad, brought it to the holy well at Innis Maree to get a drink of the healing waters. The dog was cured, but the offended spirit departed from the well for ever. It ceased to heal.[5]

Certain wells were credited with the power of warding off disease from a district. Such was St. Olaf's well in Cruden.

> St. Olave's well, low by the sea,
> Where pest nor plague shall ever be.

[1] W. R. Smith, Religion of Semites, 184.
[2] Gregor, Notes, 40.
[3] Polson, Our Highland Folk-Lore Heritage, 143.
[4] Fraser, Northern Folk-Lore, 21.
[5] Gordon Cumming, In the Hebrides, 191.

Sometimes a well might be connected in the popular mind with the fairies. In Inverness there was a fairy well. If a poor woman had an unthriving bantling, she left it there with a small offering, such as a vessel of milk. In the morning she would find the elf child gone, and her own healthy offspring restored.[1] The well had the same virtue as the Lykar Cairn in Slains. More remarkable still was the power of discernment of a holy well in Eigg, and its differentiation in the treatment of Islesmen and strangers. This well, called Five Pennies, could cure several distempers. "The natives told me," says Martin, "that it never fails to cure any person of their first disease, only by the drinking a quantity of it for the space of two or three days, and that if a stranger lie at this well in the night time, it will procure a deformity in some part of the body, but has no effect on a native, and this, they say, hath been frequently experimented."[2] To this well was attributed the power of knowing when it was a first disease of the patient, and also ability to discern between the native and the outlander. The common folks ascribed personality, divine personality, to the holy well.

7. *Spirit of Well Embodied.*—The sacred waters themselves might be the form in which that personality found expression, or in which it was embodied. On the other hand, the spirit of the water might be enshrined in some creature such as fish or a fly. As a fly, it manifested itself at the well of St. Michael, near the parish church of Kirkmichael in Banffshire. It is thus described by the minister in 1793: "Near the kirk of this parish there is a fountain once highly celebrated and anciently dedicated to St. Michael. Many a patient have its waters restored to health and many more have attested the efficacy of their virtues. But as the presiding power is sometimes capricious and apt to desert his charge, it now lies neglected, choked with weeds, unhonoured and unfrequented. In better days it was not so: for the winged guardian under the semblance of a fly was never absent from his duty. If the sober matron wished to know the issue of her husband's ailment or the love-sick nymph that of her languishing swain, they visited the well of St. Michael. Every movement of the sympathetic fly was regarded in silent awe: and as he appeared cheerful or dejected, the anxious votaries

[1] Fraser, Northern Folk-Lore, 17.
[2] Martin, Description of Western Islands, 662.

drew their presages . . . The guardian fly was believed to be immortal . . .; to the eye of ignorance, he might sometimes appear dead, but it was only a transmigration into a similar form which made little alteration to the real identity." [1] This was one of the famous wells to which devotees came from afar. Elgin Kirk Session in 1613, and again in 1625, forbade the going on pilgrimage to St. Michael's well. The uniqueness of the well consists in the prophetic fly, a survival of the ancient local deity.[2] Dr. George Henderson instances the evil spirit appearing as a fly in a story of the King of the Lombards.[3] Among the Melanesians, Vui, ghosts, or rather genii, to whom prayer is addressed, appear in the form of a spider.[4]

The local deity might also assume the form of an oracular worm, such as the one which was to be found in a well on the top of a hill in the parish of Strathdon. If this worm were found alive, it was an omen of the recovery of the patient. There was a similar well in the village of Ardnacloich in Appin.[5] Both these wells were prophetic. The genii of the springs indicated by their condition the issue of the problems presented to them. Apart from such prognostications given by the well of the spring, the state of the water itself, the quantity in the well, the number of bubbles, the sinking or floating of various articles were all viewed with anxiety as prophetic of the future of the patient's illness. The water of Tobar-na-domhnuich in Fodderty parish was of this nature. After the patient had been bathed in its water, if it turned blue, it augured recovery : if it became a mossy brown, the patient would die.[6]

To the bee was attached a certain sanctity,[7] and to the bee, the Fiddler's well near Cromarty owed its origin. Guided to a certain spot by the voice of his dead companion, William Fiddler saw a large field bee come humming from the west and fly round his head. Then he heard it say, " Dig, Willie, and drink " in the voice of his departed friend. He did so, and no sooner had he removed a sod from the bank, than a spring of clear water gushed forth, possessed of great healing virtue.[8] The bee may

[1] S.A., XII, 465.
[2] Survivals, 79.
[3] Gomme, Ethnology, 102.
[4] Lang, Myth, Ritual, and Religion, II, 23 f.
[5] Dalyell, Darker Superstitions, 506 f.
[6] Polson, Highland F.L., 140.
[7] See p. 163.
[8] H. Miller, Scenes and Legends, 335 ff.

be regarded as the form in which the late companion returned, or it may have embodied the spirit of the holy waters still uncovered. Again, the guardian spirit might appear as a frog or fish. A well at Kilmore in Skye was noted for the single trout that inhabited it. The natives regarded it with reverence, and though often caught by chance in their wooden pails, they were careful to preserve it from being destroyed.[1] There is a well at Glenquithel in the parish of Aberdour, where within the last half century was a trout regarded with similar veneration. No one dared to touch it. To destroy it would have been sacrilege. That the trout was sacroscant or taboo is suggested by the fishermen's horror when it happened to be caught in the herring net. It augured the failure of the fishing for the rest of the season.[2]

Though not inhabiting a well, a frog in a "ream bowie" appears as a relic of a similar homage. "The ream pig or ream bowie," says Dr. Gregor, "was never washed. Washing took away all the luck. A frog was kept by some in it and bore the name of the paddle doo."[3] As a matter of fact the frog does appear in England as the spirit of the well. At Shropshire, in Acton Barnett, there is a spring of great virtue where the spirits of the well appear as frogs, the largest of the three now being known as Satan.[4]

The persistence of belief in the healing wells was most marked. It is doubtful if it has even yet wholly disappeared. A well near the Burn of Oxhill in Rathven was much resorted to as late as 1842.[5] Another well in the same parish had this distinction. Belief in its efficacy survived the existence of the well itself. A tenant of the farm on which it was situated closed it up, but some mothers from Buckie with dwining bairns went to the old site and scooped a hole which was soon filled with water. The children were washed in the pool. No sooner were they placed on their mother's backs for the homeward journey than they fell asleep and "they batten't like bands aye sin syne."[6] Offerings were found in 1890 and in the following year in two wells in Strathdon and Corgarff.[7]

[1] Gomme, Ethnology, 92 f.; cf. S.N. and Q. (1892), p. 188.
[2] Gregor, Notes, 140.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Hope, Holy Wells, 146.
[5] N.S.A., Banffshire. 247.
[6] Gregor. Notes, 42.
[7] Gregor, Folk-Lore, III (1892), 69.

In the later pilgrimages, often a solitary individual sought the blessings of the well, unwilling that his sceptical fellows should know of his action A traveller, writing in 1881, tells how he saw, on a May Day at Fergan's well, a lad busily engaged drinking the precious water till the onlooker thought he would hurt himself.[1] This lad belonged to a class in which belief is transmitted from generation to generation, a belief of whose existence outsiders are often entirely ignorant. Deep down in the consciousness of many of the peasantry, there still lingers faith in the virtue of the old healing wells.

This faith may exist alongside the newer faith, which is slowly weaning men from the old ways. The Craiguck well in the parish of Avoch retained the devotion of pilgrims, long after journeys to most of the other wells had ceased to be made. Like the well of Spey, great concourses of people used to muster there, before sunrise on the first Sunday of May. Young and old, hale and hearty, as well as sick and diseased, thronged to it as to a fair. Every one drank at the spring, some using vessels, others kneeling down and lapping up the beneficent waters. Then they deposited a thread or piece of clothing on a large briar bush near the spring. "It was not without astonishment," wrote Sir Arthur Mitchell in 1862, "that, in so Protestant a part of Protestant Scotland as the parish of Avoch, I found the bush above Craiguck well, when I visited it last summer literally covered with such offerings. Legion was their name. . . . I am satisfied there is always a vague feeling that some supernatural power will be made more friendly."[2] At this well, Miss Gordon Cumming tells of the old and new meeting, and the ensuing struggle. As the first rays of the sun appeared. Jock Forsyth is seen coming down the brae in great haste He is evidently deeply moved. He rushes to the well, muttering some words, falls on his knees and takes a draught. "Then he rose and said, 'O Lord, Thou knowest that weel would it be for me this day an' I had stoopit my knees and my heart before Thee in spirit and in truth as often as I have stoopit them afore this well. But we maun keep the custom of our fathers.'" So he stepped aside among the rest and dedicated his offering to the briar bush, which by this time could hardly be seen, owing to the

[1] Phillips, Wanderings in the Highlands of Aberdeenshire and Banffshire, 20.

[2] P.S.A.S., IV (1862), 269 ff.; cf. Past in the Present, 149 f.

number of shreds that covered it.[1] Jock Forsyth is a type. In him is represented the conflict between the old and the new, a struggle in which the old is daily losing ground. In the next generation, whether the newer faith has taken a deep hold or not, the ancient ways, through the advance of knowledge, become discredited, and the pilgrimages to the ancient shrines cease to be made.

The last stage in the story of the holy well is when it is regarded merely as a "wishing well," a place of resort for holiday makers, who on the sacred day, observed from of old, wend their way to the goal of many a pilgrimage, cheerfully express a wish, and leave some small coin as an offering. The best known of these wishing wells is the Well of the Wood or Tobar-na-Coille at Culloden, also known as the Lady, or St. Mary's well. This was a celebrated well in the distant past. Crowds used to flock from all parts of the North and West on the Saturday night before the first Sunday in May. At the present day, there has been a revival of pilgrimages to this sacred fountain. To the student of the ancient rites, perhaps the most interesting survival is the attachment of a rag or piece of clothing to a thorn bush beside the well. According to my correspondent, Rev. D. A. Anderson of Rothiemay, this seems to be as generally observed as the sipping of the water. A silver coin used to be regarded as the proper offering, but now copper, as well as silver, is dropped into the well. The act of fixing the rag to the bush, by which in the olden time the disease was transferred to the sacred tree, is a remarkable relic. Many who perform this ritual act cannot be conscious of any malady they wish to transmit, they are only conscious of keeping up the traditions of the fathers.

The wish is formulated as the coin is dropped into the well. Probably with some of the pilgrims and pleasure-seekers there is more belief in the efficacy of this part of the ceremonial than most people would be inclined to admit. In the subconsciousness at least, there is a feeling that some good may result, and the wish be realised. In May, 1927, when the well was cleaned out, it was found that £21 had been deposited in it as an offering. One would imagine that even in the days of its greatest fame, the gifts of weary, sick, and diseased devotees could hardly have equalled this offertory.

[1] Gordon Cumming, In the Hebrides. 209.

CHAPTER IV.

SPIRITS OF RIVERS, LOCHS, AND OCEAN.

VARIOUS peoples cherish a belief in the water spirit or demon who tenants streams, rivers, lochs, and oceans, and who may demand to be appeased by human sacrifice. The bunyip of Australia carries off the native women to his retreat below the waters.[1] Among certain tribes in India, the local rivers are the local deities.[2] It is easy to understand how primitive man came to ascribe supernatural powers to the spirit of the waters, and to believe it required to be propitiated by the offering of human life. The river seemed possessed of life. It could befriend and become a help to man. It could also prove hostile and work him evil. Hence his homage to the spirit of the waters.

1. *River Spirits.*—In Scotland the river spirit appeared in various shapes. The most common was in the form of a horse, when it was known as the kelpie. It haunted the fords of swollen streams and lured the unwary traveller to his doom. When the latter came at nightfall to a river, he would see a horse browsing quietly by the water side. It seemed a stray steed which he might well employ to carry him across the raging torrent. But no sooner were horse and man in the middle of the stream than kelpie threw his rider and disappeared, leaving him to perish in the water. Usually it is represented as a black horse with staring eyes and some other marks, which the benighted traveller does not observe till too late. Sometimes its sleek coat was white as in the case of the white horse of Spey which invited a couple returning from market to mount. When they accepted the offer, they heard kelpie singing :—

> And ride weel, Davie,
> And by this night at ten o'clock
> Ye'll be in Pot Cravie.[3]

[1] Tylor, Primitive Culture, II, 209. [3] *Ibid.*, 193.
[2] Henderson, Norse Influence, 76.

This was believed to be the song it sang to those it had lured to their doom, and who, once seated on its back, could not escape. A Cairney correspondent, writing in 1884, gives another version of kelpie's song. " I remember, when children, we used to be told that water kelpie would sing to the poor deluded ones he managed to entice away :—

> Sit weel, Janety, or ride weel, Davie,
> For this time the morn, ye'll be in Pot Cravie.[1]

A noted kelpie was that which haunted Loch Ness. It loitered about the woods, decked out in all the trappings of a fine riding horse. If any thoughtless traveller mounted, it rushed with him to Loch-na-dorb, Loch Spynie or Loch Ness, and devoured him.

Kelpie might assume the human form. A wayfarer crossing the Burn of Strichen heard some one speaking. It was an old man mending his trousers. The traveller struck him a blow on the head. In a moment, the kelpie, for such the old man proved to be, had turned to its true form and disappeared, neighing, in a deep pool.[2] Deep pools in the river were believed to be tenanted by these guardian demons. It was dangerous to bathe in them. A man had occasion to cross the river Don by the Bridge of Luib, Corgarff, to reach his wife, then very ill. On coming to the river, he found the bridge had been swept away by a heavy flood. He had given up all hope of reaching the other bank when a tall man suddenly appeared and offered to carry him across. The anxious husband was at first doubtful, but at length accepted the offer. When they got to the middle of the river the kelpie, for so it turned out, sought to plunge its burden beneath the waters. A struggle ensued. The man got clear, and scrambled up the bank. Kelpie, disappointed of its victim, hurled after him a boulder which came to be known as the kelpie's stone.[3]

In his human form, the spirit of the river might make love to women. Such was the Braemar kelpie. He had taken a fancy to a woman that lived not far from the mill of Quoich. Her meal went done; kelpie assisted her by securing a supply. One morning, in the grey dawn, he set out from the mill with a

[1] Banff Field Club (1884), 40. [2] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, I, 293.
[3] *Ibid.*, VII (1889), 200.

sack of meal on his back. The miller met him, and seizing a fairy whorl [1] that was lying near, hurled it at kelpie with a threat and an oath: "Kelpie, or nae kelpie, God d—m you, A'll break your leg!" Kelpie's leg was broken. He tumbled into the mill lade, was carried into the river and drowned.[2] Sometimes the lady on whom kelpie lavished his affections only discovered his true character by seeing a piece of water-weed or rush in his hair.

The guardian spirit of the river pool might also assume the female form. In this shape, some have named it the water wraith. Hugh Miller speaks of the goblin or water wraith of the river Conon in Ross-shire "who used to appear as a tall woman dressed in green, but distinguished chiefly by her withered meagre countenance, ever distorted by a malignant scowl." [3] By her forbidding appearance, she seems to have resembled a water-witch, if such there were, more than a kelpie with its alluring ways. She certainly belonged to the class of hostile spirits. The Linn of Lynturk used to be haunted by a lady clothed in green and white. Her last appearance was when she attacked the Laird of Kincraigie on his way home, after dining with his neighbour, the Laird of Tulloch.[4] It was in circumstances such as these that most of the water spirits appeared. They were seen by those who had dined well. It may be said that the outward form of the river demon depended on the mental condition of the observer. A Deeside packman, returning from Aberdeen, had stopped at various ale-houses to refresh himself. By the time he reached the Feugh, it struck his fuddled mind that instead of riding his own nag, he had been riding kelpie. It had the appearance of a horse, but its mane seemed to be formed of wee fiery serpents, curling through others and spitting burning brimstone. In crossing the Feugh, kelpie pitched him off its back and disappeared into the water.[5] It is clear the packman must have imbibed much potent spirit that day. But these tales were believed. They helped to perpetuate faith in the supernatural occupants of the river.

[1] A stone whorl was kept at each mill and was fixed at night, when the mill was not in use, on the spindle to prevent the fairies from setting the mill agoing.

[2] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, VII (1889), 201; Buchan Field Club, III, 129.

[3] H. Miller, My Schools and Schoolmasters, I, 202.

[4] Smith, Aberdeenshire, II, 887. [5] Grant, Tales of the Glen, 53.

Water spirits are conceived as upon the whole hostile to man.[1] The perils of water, especially of flooded rivers, swirling pools, or stormy seas, account for the belief that these spirits were dangerous beings who must be appeased by sacrifice.

Another conception of the river spirit regards it not as embodied in human or animal form, but rather as invisible, the personification or deification of the river. The river Spey is spoken of as "she," and bears the character of being blood-thirsty. This is readily intelligible when one considers the rapidity of its flow, and the loss of life that took place when it came whirling down in furious spate and flood. The common belief was that "she" must have at least one victim yearly.[2] A similar belief about the river Dee is expressed in the rhyme :—

Blood-thirsty Dee
Each year needs three :
But bonny Don
She needs none.

The same ideas were prevalent on the Borders :—

Tweed said to Till,
" What gars ye rin sae still ? "
Till said to Tweed,
" Though ye rin wi' speed,
An' I rin slaw,
Yet whare ye droon ae man,
I droon twa."

In the mind of primitive man rivers were uncanny. Under the surface there was believed to lurk a demon which gave ear to the prayer of its suppliants but which had to be appeased by human sacrifice. A man named Farquharson-na-cat, i.e. Farquharson of the Wand, so named from his trade of basket-making, in crossing the Dee above the Linn, fell into the river, and was drowned. All search failed to discover his body. His wife, taking her husband's plaid, knelt down on the river bank and prayed to the water spirit to give her back her dead. She then threw the plaid into the stream. Next morning her husband's corpse, with the plaid around it, was found lying on the edge of the pool.[3] The widow's prayer was answered by the river deity.

[1] Cf. Gomme, Ethnology, 78. [2] Gregor, Folk-Lore, III (1892), 72.
[3] *Ibid.*, 71 f.

A somewhat similar story is related of the Don at Inverurie. A young man was accidentally drowned. Failing to recover the body, a wise woman bade an ordinary soft biscuit be put into the river at the point where the accident was believed to have taken place, and on reaching the spot where the body lay the biscuit would sink. Her directions were followed and the corpse found. The spirit of the river had been keeping the body in thrall. It was appeased by the gift of the biscuit.[1]

While the water deity was often regarded as hostile, there are many instances of helpful and beneficent service it rendered. A Corgarff man went to the mill to fetch home his meal. He left his horse standing outside while he went in for the sacks. The horse bolted in his absence, and the farmer, on emerging from the mill, was in great distress to find it gone. "I wis'," he exclaimed, "I hed ony kyne o' behst, although it was a water kelpie." Hardly were the words uttered when a horse appeared with a halter on its head. Soon it was loaded with the meal which it carried to the farmhouse. The farmer, having unloaded it and tied it to a harrow, went into the house with the meal. On returning he found horse and harrow gone, and heard the plunging of the beast in a big pool in the Don.[2] Kelpie dealt kindly with those who dealt kindly with it. Sandy Ewan, the auld boatman of Inchbare, a little below the village of Kincardine O'Neil, had an encounter with kelpie on a terrific night of wind and rain. He brought his passenger safe from the opposite side of the river. Declining to accept any payment from such a fare, he heard several verses of song wafted back on the wind, after kelpie had bolted from the boat :—

> The Dee sall be quiet and mercifu' ever
> While you or your sons hae a boat o' the river.[3]

In addition to these voluntary services rendered by kelpie in a spirit of goodwill, it might be captured and made execute forced labour. It is curious to find such a universal tradition of this unwilling service. To catch the creature, it was necessary to get "a waith horse" bridle, and cautiously cast it over kelpie's head. This bridle was a halter with the cross cut on

[1] S.N. and Q., 1st series, III, 104.
[2] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, VII (1889), 199.
[3] Grant, Tales of the Glen, 57 f.

the cheeks of it: if a man could only get the beast bridled, he might keep and work it as long as he chose. A big black horse was seen grazing on the banks of the Ugie near Peterhead. A man cast a kelpie bridle over its head. It was secured and employed in carrying stones to build the bridge over the Ugie at Inverugie. When its services were no longer needed, it was set at liberty. On departing, it cried :—

Sehr back and sehr behns,
Cairry't a' the Brig o' Innerugie's stanes.[1]

Such labour was irksome to kelpie. The same thought is expressed when the branks was removed on finishing a similar task near the Deveron. A miller there bridled kelpie and employed him for many weeks, without much food or mercy, in carrying stones to build the Mill of Magie in Marnoch. On taking his leave, his last words were :—

Lean sides and sair banes,
Carrying the Mill o' Magie's stanes.[2]

Similar sayings are reported of kelpie on completing laborious tasks at Berryleys and Mill of Fintray.[3]

In harnessing kelpie to labour, it was essential that the branks with the crosses should never be taken from its head. A man took a kelpie from the Ugie and worked it as a horse most of the season. In spring when food was scarce and dry, kelpie got lean, and the man being from home, his wife let kelpie out. Thinking it would eat better without the bit, she slipped off the bridle. Kelpie at once flung up its heels, and galloped away, crying :—

Harrow, harrow wi' fa ye like :
Ye's harrow nae mair wi' me, ye tyke.[4]

It is remarkable the number of these stories with which the rural mind was saturated.

The spirit of the river also appears as a beneficent being, dispensing fertility. In this, it shows the same or similar powers as the well of Melshach.[5] The river Tweed caused the Lady of Drummelziel to submit to its embraces in her lord's absence. On

[1] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, I, 292.
[2] Pratt, Buchan, 336.
[3] Gregor, Banffshire Field Club (1890), 58.
[4] Milne, Myths, 25 f.
[5] Frazer, Magic Art, II, 159 f.

his return from the Holy Land, he found her nursing a healthy boy who was named Tweedie after his river-father and who in due season succeeded to the title as Baron Drummelziel.[1]

The spirit of the water has been known to give counsel to man. When workmen were engaged in building the ancient Church of Deer upon a small hill called Bissau, they were surprised to find the work impeded by supernatural obstacles. At length the spirit of the river was heard to say :—

> It is not here, it is not here,
> That ye're to big the Kirk o' Deer,
> But on the tap o' Tillery,
> Where many a corpse shall after lie.[2]

The site of the church was accordingly transferred to Taptillery, an eminence at some distance from the place where the building had been begun.

Belief in the river spirits continued till at least the middle of last century. In central Banffshire, my informant, still alive, says they were firmly believed in by the old people with whom he came in contact. Many a woman had a narrow escape from being spirited away by them, and was only saved by repeating some Christian formula.

2. *Lochs.*—Like wells, there were lochs believed to be the haunts of water spirits and possessed of great healing power. One of the most noted was Loch Monaar in Strathnaver, in the county of Sutherland. Though little better than a horse pond, its fame was such that it continued to draw crowds seeking the virtue of its waters as late as the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Tradition tells how this Loch attained its celebrity. In a distant past, there lived in Strathnaver an old woman who did many marvellous things by means of a white pebble. One of the Gordons of Strathnaver wished to get possession of the magic amulet. Being refused, he resolved to drown the woman. After struggling with her, he took up a heavy stone with which to kill her. At this, she plunged into the water, throwing the pebble before her and crying, "May it do good to all created things save a Gordon of Strathnaver!" He stoned her to death in the water, while she kept crying "Manaar! manaar!"

[1] Hope, Holy Wells, 103.
[2] N.S.A., Aberdeenshire, 147; Pratt, Buchan, 81.

(shame ! shame !), and the loch is called the Loch of Shame to this day.[1] Whether this was the original cause of its celebrity or not, for many years deranged and fatuous persons were brought from Orkney in the North to Inverness in the South, at no matter what expense or risk, to find healing in its muddy waters. The arrival usually took place in the evening. The patient was bound, and sparingly fed. As soon as the sun set he was immediately unbound, led forth to the middle of the water, and hurled head foremost under it. Then he was dragged out, stripped and dried and conveyed home by his attendants in the confident expectation of recovery.[2] This was the practice in endeavouring to cure a mental patient. In many respects, it was similar to the process followed at Loch Maree. Even in 1877, the loch was still a great resort of those in the northern counties seeking the benefit of its curative waters. The following account is given of a " confluence " there on the 14th August of that year. This date corresponds to Lammas (O.S.), which also witnessed the great gatherings at the well of Spey. " The impotent, the halt, the lunatic, and the tender infant were all waiting about midnight for an immersion in Loch Monaar. The night was calm, the stars countless, and meteors were occasionally shooting about in all quarters of the heavens above. A streaky white belt could be observed in the remotest part of the firmament, yet with all this, the night was dark, so dark that one could not recognise a friend or foe, but by close contact and speech. About fifty persons all told were present near one spot, and I believe other parts of the loch were similarly occupied, but I cannot vouch for this—only I heard voices which would lead me so to infer. About twelve stripped, and walked into the loch, performing their ablutions about three times. Those who were not able to act for themselves were assisted, some of them being led willingly, others by force, for there were cases of each kind. One young woman, strictly guarded, was an object of great pity. She raved in a distressing manner, repeating religious phrases, some of which were very earnest and pathetic. She prayed her guardians not to immerse her, saying it was not a Communion occasion, asking if they could call this righteousness or faithfulness or if they could compare the loch to the right arm

[1] Dempster, Folk-Lore Journal, VI (1888), 221.
[2] Sage, Memorabilia Domestica, 241 f.

of Christ. These utterances were enough to move any person hearing them. Poor girl! What possible good could immersion do her? I would have more faith in a shower bath, applied pretty freely and often to the head. No male, so far as I could see, denuded himself for a plunge. Whether this was owing to hesitation regarding the virtues of the water, or whether any of the men were ailing, I could not ascertain. These gatherings took place twice a year, and were known far and near to such as put belief in the spell. But the climax of the absurdity was in paying the loch in sterling coin. Forsooth, the cure cannot be effected without money cast into the waters! I may add that the practice of dipping in the loch is said to have been carried on from time immemorial, and it is alleged that many cures have been effected by it." [1]

A loch might demand a sacrifice like the river. All are not beneficent. In the Uplands, near the boundary between Aberdeenshire and Banffshire, is a small loch called Loch Wan, i.e. Lamb's Loch. It now forms part of a deer forest, but the country round it was once grazed by several tenants. Each of them had to offer to the spirit of the loch the first lamb of his flock. Otherwise half of his sheep would be drowned before the close of the grazing season. The spirit of the loch, like the spirit of the river, had to be propitiated by sacrifice.[2] It might also become incarnate and assume the form of a man. Lochan-nan-deaan lay between Corgarff and Tomintoul. It was believed to be bottomless and the abode of a water spirit that delighted in human sacrifice. Many had perished there. On one occasion the men of Strathdon resolved to draw the water from the lochan. When ready to start they heard a terrific yell from the water, and a little man appeared with a red cap on his head. The men fled, leaving their tools behind. The spirit gave a mighty roar that shook the hills, and then vanished in the water.[3] The spirit of the water might also appear as a woman. In this shape it was a harbinger of swollen streams.[4] Again it might manifest itself as the familiar kelpie. There was the noted

[1] From *Inverness Courier*, quoted in Henderson, Survivals, 311 f.

[2] Folk-Lore, III (1892), 70 f.

[3] Gregor, Folk-Lore, III (1892), 70. A similar Welsh legend is told by Professor Rhys, Celtic Folk-Lore, I, 18 f., the object being to secure not gold but the lake damsel.

[4] S.A., XII, 463.

water horse of Loch Ness. Loch-nan-spiordan, i.e. Loch of Spirits, was tenanted by two spirits who made their appearance as a water horse and a water bull.[1] The water cow was seen as late as 1854 in a loch in Gairloch.[2]

3. *The Ocean.*—There was a spirit or god of the ocean, as of the rivers. On the West Coast he was known as Shony. On the East Coast as well as on the West, offerings were made to the great water spirit. The fishermen "carried meat and drink to the boatside and cast drink upon the boat."[3] At Gaza, bread is still thrown into the sea by way of offering.[4] The primitive mind works the same everywhere. Man, faced with the wonders and terrors of the mighty deep, would propitiate the Great Spirit indwelling there. Orkney lads fishing with the line were always most successful when they threw back into the sea the first fish caught. It brought luck. In reality, it was a relic of the offering of the first-fruits to the sea god.

Moray Firth fishermen, when at sea, would never mention such words as Church or manse or minister. Any utterance suggestive of the new faith would be displeasing to the ancient god of the ocean, and might bring disaster upon the boat. On the other hand, this taboo on certain words may have a different origin. To the trout was attached a certain sanctity. It was uncanny to mention the name of a supernatural being. The pious Jew would not utter the name Jahve. It was dangerous to attract the attention of the demons at sea.[5] In Orkney and Shetland, so firm was the belief that the spirit of the waters must have his sacrifice that it was forbidden to save any one from drowning. The sea god must have his prey, and if deprived of his victim, will take vengeance upon those who interfere. Writing in 1874, Mr. Arthur Laurenson said there had been several cases within the preceding forty years of standing by and letting men and women drown.[6] In Scott's "Pirate," Bryce, the pedlar, warns Mordaunt against saving a ship-wrecked sailor. "Are you mad," said the pedlar, "you have lived sae lang in Zetland to risk the saving a drowning man? Wot ye not if ye bring him to life again he will be sure to do you some capital

[1] S.A., XII, 463.
[2] Dixon, Gairloch, 162.
[3] See p. 22.
[4] Smith, Religion of Semites, 177.
[5] Cf. Westermarck, *op. cit.*, II, 640 ff.
[6] P.S.A.S., X, 711 ff. (1874).

injury." Sir Walter has not here caught the underlying idea. The reluctance to save the drowning was not confined to Orkney and Shetland. It was exhibited amongst the seafaring population of the East Coast. "The sea takes the saver of life instead of the saved as it 'maun hae its nummer,' according to the saying told by R. Grant, Peterhead." [1] It was even regarded as "ill luckit" to touch the corpse of a man drowned at sea, or to bring it ashore. On three occasions Rosehearty fishermen came across a dead body floating in the sea. They would not take it into their boat. It was an offering to the sea god. Such an offering must not be touched.[2] At Lybster, some fishermen took a corpse to land. The owner of the boat was not with them. Great was his consternation when he heard of their action. He filled the boat with water, rubbed it and scrubbed it. Had it not been almost new, the likelihood is he would never have set foot in it again.[3] There is a suggestion of human sacrifice to the ancient sea god in the custom described by Captain Shewan as followed at the launch of a ship at Aberdeen. He had also witnessed the same practices when Peterhead whalers first took to the water. The custom consisted of the ducking and sometimes thrashing of ship carpenters' apprentices. As the ship left the slips "two or more stalwart shipwrights took up positions by the water-side, and, at the critical moment, seized any victims within reach, and plunged them head over heels into the recoiling wave thrown up by the vessel's passage into the water. They were ducked not once but three times, unless they were agile enough to escape: and I have been told by an old Aberdonian that he has seen unfortunate youths chased, dripping wet, half-way up the street, and when caught, brought back and ducked until it was deemed their baptism had been sufficiently thorough." [4]

The Vikings of Scandinavia bound a victim to the rollers on which the vessel slipped to the water, thus reddening the keel with human, sacrificial blood. The same practice is found among other peoples. In 1784, when one of the Bey of Tripoli's cruisers was launched, a black slave was led forward and tied to the prow. And here in the city of Aberdeen within living memory, lads were roughly handled and thrown into the water, a sacrificial offering to the great sea god.[5]

[1] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, III (1885), 184. [2] *Ibid.*, 551.
[3] *Ibid.*, 551. [4] Shewan, The Great Days of Sail, 82 f.
[5] Westermarck, *op. cit.*, I, 452.

It is easy to understand how raging torrent and stormy sea should have this blood-thirsty character ascribed to them. To savage man, struggling with nature, it seemed as if the fierce waters were tenanted by some devouring demon. At times the swollen river itself appeared to embody or personify this hostile spirit. Efforts at rescue sometimes succeeded, only at the cost of the life of the gallant rescuer. The swiftly rushing river, the wild ocean in its majesty both alike demanded a sacrifice—the sacrifice of a man's life. The fountains, on the other hand, the springs welling forth in all their refreshing sweetness, as a rule, presented no such peril to the wayfarer. They were tenanted by beneficent spirits, reviving and quickening the weary pilgrim.

As other water spirits at times assumed human or animal form, and in such guise appeared to man, the spirit of the ocean might be embodied in the merman or mermaid. The latter was the more usual form. The upper part of the body was like that of a full-grown woman, though much smaller in size. the features were flat, with white thick-set teeth, and long hair, falling down over the shoulders. Often she was seen sitting on the rocks combing her tresses. The lower part of the body was like that of a fish. "In the village," says Sir Hugh G. Reid, writing of Buchan in 1870," lived a man who had seen and conversed with the mermaid under a great cliff off the Bullers of Buchan." [1] Peter Buchan said belief in the mermaid prevailed amongst a good few, particularly the sea-faring men, who thought the caves along the coast were tenanted by them. "Some old men," he says, "remember a mermaid pitching upon the bowsprit of a small vessel belonging to Peterhead, which was driven among the rocks near Slains Castle, and all hands perished save one man who bore the tidings to land." [2] This story brings out the fact that the appearance of the mermaid was generally of ill augury. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, a mermaid was often seen on the shores of the Cromarty Firth in the moonlight, sitting on a stone and braiding her long yellow tresses.[3] Even half a century ago, there was widespread belief in the mermaid amongst the fishing population. A merman was seen off Port Gordon, Banffshire, in 1814. An account is

[1] Past and Present, 258 f. [2] P. Buchan, Annals of Peterhead, 41.
[3] Miller, Scenes and Legends, 286.

given by the schoolmaster of Rathven. Two fishermen, for whose character and veracity he vouches, were returning from the fishing " about three or four o'clock yesterday afternoon, when about a quarter of a mile from the shore, the sea being perfectly calm, they observed, at a small distance from their boat, with its back towards them, and half its body above the water, a creature of a tawny colour, appearing like a man sitting, with his body half-bent. Surprised at this, they approached towards him, till they came within a few yards, when the noise made by the boat occasioned the creature to turn about, which gave the men a better opportunity of observing him. His countenance was swarthy, his hair short and curled, of a colour between a green and a grey : he had small eyes, a flat nose, his mouth was large, and his arms of an extraordinary length. Above the waist, he was shaped like a man, but as the water was clear, my informants could perceive that from the waist downwards, his body tapered considerably or, as they expressed it, like a large fish without scales, but could not see the extremity." The men had not much time to observe the creature, for, looking at them steadfastly for a moment, he suddenly dived, but rose again at some distance from the boat accompanied by what the fishermen took to be a female of the same species. For she had " breasts " and her hair was not curled, but reached a little below the shoulders. The men were much alarmed at the apparitions, and made for the shore with all haste, when they gave the above account to the schoolmaster without any variation.[1] It does not seem difficult to identify this merman and mermaid.

[1] Letter dated 16th August of Geo. McKenzie, schoolmaster, Raffan, to the *Aberdeen Chronicle* of 20th August, 1814.

CHAPTER V.

SPIRITS OF TREES, STONES, CAVES.

1. *Trees.*—Tree worship was closely associated with well worship. Beside the sacred well, was the sacred tree. The association was natural, for the tree, whose roots drew refreshing moisture from the holy well, was itself regarded as partaking in the divine life. To both, offerings were made. At the annual fair of the terebinth and well of Abraham at Mamre, heathen visitors, who regarded the place as a haunt of demons, offered sacrifices beside the tree, in addition to casting libations of wine and cakes and myrrh and incense into the well.[1] Tree worship like well worship was at one time universal in Europe. It was observed in Africa.[2] In Syria, Christianity has been powerless to eradicate it.[3] Among the ancient Celts, the mistletoe and the oak on which it grew were sacred. The tree, like the spring or river, was believed to be animate. At first it was regarded as the body of the tree spirit, later as merely its abode, its habitation.

In Scotland there are holy wells without adjacent trees. The lapse of time probably accounts for their disappearance, just as, on the other hand, on Innis Maree, there is a holy tree without a well. Through the changes of time, the tree, though but a withered trunk, is still there, while the well has been filled up. But generally, of individual sacred trees, it may be said, they are to be found in close proximity to a holy well. Till near the end of last century, a thorn bush which formed a canopy over the Craiguck well was covered each season with little pieces of rag, offered by the suppliants.[4] The thorn bush at Culloden is still embellished with rags and pieces of clothing.[5] At Deskford, in 1836, there were the remains of a holy tree. Beside the ruins

[1] Cf. Smith, Religion of Semites, 177.
[2] Tylor, Primitive Culture, II. 197.
[3] Smith, *op. cit.*, 186.
[4] See p. 59.
[5] See p. 60.

of the old church is St. John's well. Near it was "the once stately tree" named St. John's tree, dedicated to the saint, and then but a withered trunk.[1] About the middle of last century, at Aboyne, was an old tree called the Skeulan tree and also a well called the Skeulan well. They were then held in great veneration.[2] One of the most celebrated of all the trees was the holy tree in Innis Maree, on Loch Maree. Long after the adjoining well had become dry, pilgrims resorted to this famous tree, and attached their offerings. When Sir Arthur Mitchell visited it in 1861, he found it studded with nails which had originally affixed pieces of the patient's clothing to the tree. He saw hundreds of nails, and to one was still fastened a faded ribbon. Countless pennies and half-pennies were driven edgeways into the wood. Over many, the bark was closing.[3] The years that have elapsed have wrought great changes in the tree. Colonel Edington, M.D., Glasgow, writing from the Loch Maree Hotel, describes the famous oak as he saw it on 27th August, 1927. "(1) The bare trunk is still there. It is evidently dead, and it has been fixed into the filled-up holy well, which latter is represented by merely a dip in the ground. The trunk leans against a neighbouring tree (which also appears to have died) for support, is grey white, has no bark, twigs or leaves: and it stands I should think about fifteen feet high and is rather rugged and worn away at the top. (2) No nails are visible: but it is studded with pennies driven in edge on. Either from being driven in obliquely, or from the exposed part being turned down by the blow of the stone or iron or other weapon used to hammer them into the tree, the effect is that the tree for about eight or nine feet up from the ground is covered with metallic scales. The scaly covering forms armour something like what is depicted on a dragon. (3) Visitors go there to see the tree and hammer in coins and probably wish a silent wish before leaving." The holy tree has shared the fate of the holy well: the devotion of pilgrims has proved its undoing. The coins, hammered in and destroying the bark, have killed the object of their veneration. When Queen Victoria visited Innis Maree in 1877, she fixed her offering in what Mr. Dixon calls "the wishing tree." There is the same deterioration in tree worship as in well worship. In the great days, the patient drank

[1] N.S.A., XIII. Banffshire, 68. [2] N.S.A., Aberdeenshire, 1060.
[3] P.S.A.S., IV (1862), 263.

of the water, then knelt at the foot of the venerable oak, presented an offering, and thereafter bathed thrice in the loch.[1] Homage was offered to the holy tree as to the holy well, but in later times it degenerated into "a wishing tree." In the popular mind, virtue has not entirely passed from it. The affixing of these coins speaks of a lingering belief and devotion. A wish silently formed when any article was attached to the tree, or coin driven in, would certainly be realised. As at the holy wells, any one removing an offering from the tree would suffer misfortune, probably the burning of his house.[2] That animal offerings to sacred trees are still made in the remoter parts of Europe is shown by the report of a Government official who visited Ofoten in Northern Norway. In a desolate spot where he rested, he found a dog's dead body nailed to a birch tree and hanging head downwards. On closer inspection, he saw a piece of wood nailed to the tree underneath the dog with the inscription: "I give you, O my faithful dog, to Death. Kneeling and in sorrow, I kill you and nail you to this tree with incantation, that all wild beasts shall lose their teeth, and leave my cows and reindeers in peace. May the wild beasts flee from this land as the grasshoppers invaded Egypt on Moses's command. Prayed by me Joa Gamberg." [3] There is here the same sacrificial offering to the spirit of the tree as was seen in the offering to the spirit of the fire. There is a oneness in the nature worship, founded on its efforts to propitiate the unseen power and so to satisfy man's needs and still his fears.

If the remains of the worship of particular trees are scanty in the North, there is no lack of evidence as to the virtues and powers believed to inhere in the mountain ash or rowan.[4] The rowan was protective rather than generative. It did not bring blessing so much as ward off evil. This belief sprang from an age when it was conceived as the abode of a good spirit, hostile to the powers of darkness.

Other trees to which similar virtue attached were the elder and honeysuckle. Many a home was secured against evil by an elder or bourtree hedge: the honeysuckle or woodbine was a favourite shrub, and along with the rowan, a mighty barrier to the ingress of the witch.

[1] Fraser, Northern Folk-Lore, 28. [3] Dixon, Gairloch, 150 f.
[2] London *Observer*, 19th June, 1927, from their Oslo correspondent.
[4] See 219 f.

Dalyell thinks the saining of the parturient with a fir candle may point to the sanctity of the fir tree,[1] but it is more likely that the efficacy of the rite is due to the holy flame. The sanctity belongs to the fire.

To particular trees, supernatural qualities or powers were attributed. On Speyside, a tree was taken to witness by a dying man. There had been a quarrel between two wayfarers. One had dreamed a dream of gold. He told the secret to the other, who put him to death. The murderer dug at the foot of the tree indicated in the dream. He discovered the gold, became rich, but had no peace. Wherever he went, the tree followed. "Aye where he went, men saw a tree abune him, and behind him, aye walking where he walked, and staying where he stayed."[2]

A stone with similar attributes is referred to by Marett. It occurs in the Baram district of Borneo, where "a man protects his fruit trees by placing near them certain round stones in cleft sticks. He then utters a curse, calling upon the stones to witness it."[3] The property here ascribed to the stones is the same as in the case of the tree of witness. To both is believed to attach personal life and supernatural power.

Further there might be an intimate connection between a family and a tree. The fate of the family was linked with the fate of the tree. A certain oak with mistletoe upon it was mysteriously associated with the family of Hay—

> Where the mistletoe bats on Errol's oak
> And that oak stands fast,
> The Hays shall flourish, and their good grey hawk
> Shall not flinch before the blast.
> But when the root of the oak decays
> And the mistletoe dwines on its withered breast
> The grass shall grow on the Earl's hearth stone,
> And the corbies craw in the falcon's nest.[4]

There was the same intimate connection or bond between one of the Orkney Islands and a certain sacred tree. "One of the Orkneys possessed a still more mysterious tree, with which the fate of the islands was bound up, since if a leaf was carried away, they would pass to some foreign land."[5]

[1] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, 404.
[2] Miss Dempster, Folk-Lore Journal, VI (1888), 170 f.
[3] Marett, The Threshold of Religion, 18. [4] Pratt, Buchan, 314.
[5] *Quarterly Review*, July, 1863, 243: quoted by Kelly, Curiosities, 164.

There is some evidence of the sacred grove. Near the Chapel of St. Ninian in Enzie, Banffshire, stood, more than a century and a half ago, a row of trees "all of equal size, thick planted for about the length of a butt," which "were looked upon by the superstitious papists as sacred trees from which they reckon it sacrilege to take so much as a branch or any of the fruit." [1] This grove must have been a legacy from the earlier religion, when the natives used to frequent such sacred places and perform their religious rites. If the trees in this coppice did not actually witness the ceremonies of the old religion performed, doubtless they replaced others which provided the setting for earlier acts of worship. A sacred grove was regarded as a fitting temple of the gods. Balder the Beautiful was worshipped in a grove near the Sogne Fiord.[2] In Skye, there is a holy loch, Loch Siant, beside which was once a small coppice of which "none of the natives dare venture to cut the least branch for fear of some signal judgment to follow upon it." [3] There may be a reference to this nature worship in a notice which appears in the Records of Elgin. In May, 1638, on a Sabbath, under silence of night, George Kay and others went to the wood of Spynie and stayed all night.[4] It looks like the survival of a nature rite. Sacred groves were familiar to the old Roman. They were to be found in most countries of Europe, and were believed to be "inhabited or animated by sylvan deities." [5]

2. *Stones.*—Pillars or cairns of stone are frequently mentioned in the Old Testament. The Canaanites and early Hebrews regarded the Maṣṣebah as a sort of idol or embodiment of the divine presence. Jacob's pillar at Bethel was more than a landmark. It was anointed just as idols were in antiquity, and the pillar, not the place on which it stood, was called Beth-El, "house of God." As with other natural objects to which homage was rendered by man, the veneration of sacred stones is primitive. Certain natural rocks and boulders, appealing to the untutored imagination, were believed to be living objects with power to help or hurt mankind. They were credited with being the abode of a spirit or demon.[6] In the Middle Ages, there were various de-

[1] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, 400.
[2] Porteous, Forest Folk-Lore.
[3] Martin, Western Islands, 619.
[4] Records of Elgin, II, 64.
[5] Frazer, Magic Art, II, 43.
[6] Smith, Religion of Semites, 204-12.

nunciations by the Church of stone worship. It was condemned by Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, in the seventh century, and was among the acts of heathenism banned by King Edgar in the tenth century. Still the worship of the stone of virtue continued. Pilgrimages were made down almost to our own day by suppliants in need of assistance from the life-giving pillar. Such a stone was Clach-na-Bhan (stone of the woman), a huge granite rock on the top of Meall-ghaineah, a hill on the east side of Glen Avon, near the boundary between Braemar and Kirkmichael. By natural action, a hollow had been scooped out of the rock, forming what looked like an arm chair. Women about to become mothers climbed the hill, and seated themselves in the hollow, believing that this chairing ensured an easy delivery. "In the end of August, 1836," wrote the author of a "New History of Aberdeenshire," "the writer witnessed the chairing of twelve full-bodied women, who had that morning come from Speyside, over twenty miles, to undergo the operation."[1] Single women also made pilgrimages in the assurance that by contact with the blessed stone, they would secure husbands.[2] Originally the practice would not be entirely magical. There would be prayers offered to the numen of the rock, which was approached with awe and veneration. There are many stones on the continent of Europe to which the same virtue was ascribed. Usually, as here, the contact was made by sitting upon the rock.

The kelpie stone or needle in the Dee near Dinnet had the power of making the childless wife a joyful mother, if she passed through its magic circle. The hole is about eighteen inches in diameter. It is said that a noble lady essayed the ordeal, but her desire was not realised. She had gone through the aperture against the stream. It was necessary to pass through in the same direction as the river. A second attempt was made, and she achieved her purpose.

The power of fecundation might attach not only to a rock or boulder, but to a small stone. Here the method of imparting the fertilising virtue was different: a quartz pebble of about the size and shape of an egg was formerly employed in Sandsting

[1] Smith, Aberdeenshire, I, 514, note.
[2] Gregor, Notes, 42; McConnochie, S.N. and Q., 1st series, II, 100.

Parish, Shetland, to cure sterility. The would-be mother washed her feet in water drawn from a running stream. In the water the stone was placed. The practice has become pure magic. To the mortar stone of Fordyce, Banffshire, is attributed a certain virtue in the case of unmarried women. On Hogmanay night, it is carried by the youths of the village and placed at the door of the young woman they wish to see married during the course of the year. Its virtue consists in bringing a husband to the maiden during the year then ushered in.[1] Sir James Frazer quotes Mr. W. Mackenzie, Procurator-Fiscal of Cromarty (1917): "We are not without some traces of phallic worship here. There is a stone in the Brahan wood which is said to be 'a knocking stone.' Barren women sat in close contact upon it for the purpose of becoming fertile. . . . It lies in the Brahan wood about three miles from Dingwall." [2] So these sacred stones have the power of procuring a husband for a maiden, ensuring a family and securing an easy delivery. In all the cases, the essential condition is contact with the stone of virtue.

A stone, like a well, might be the means of restoring health. In the parish of Fyvie, amidst the ruins of an old church, was a stone supported by other two, with a space below. The top stone went by the name of the Shargar Stone, a shargar being a weakly, unthriving child. The stone got its name from the custom of "mothers passing their ailing children through the space below the stone, in the belief that what hindered their growth would be removed." [3] Here the original idea may have been that passing through the sacred circle ensured a new birth and new life.

Sacred stones were believed to be instinct with life and power. The stone at Quoybune in Birsay, every Hogmanay night, when the clock strikes twelve, marches down to the Loch of Boardhouse and dips its head in the water. It is never safe to be abroad watching its movements at that witching hour. There are many stories of venturesome outlanders—natives know better—setting out to watch this stone in its progress to the loch side. Their dead bodies were found in the morning.[4]

[1] John Milne, S.N. and Q., 2nd series, III, 39; Rorie, Caledonian Medical Journal, VIII (1911), 410.

[2] Folk-Lore, 29 (1918), 254.

[3] Mackinlay, Folk-Lore, 81.

[4] Cf. Ferguson, Rambles, 54.

These venerated megaliths have other ways of showing their resentment when tampered with. Long ago, some of the stones of Mains of Hatton Circle, Auchterless, were removed to make gateposts. The spirits inhabiting the pillars were offended at this interference, and it was with great difficulty the farmer could get his horses to pass through the gate. He resolved to replace the stones. He then found that, while two horses with difficulty dragged each stone downhill to form the gate, one horse found it an easy task to pull a stone uphill to the circle. A similar story is told of the Drumel stone on the farm of Noth, near Gartly. The stone was taken to the farm to form a lintel over a doorway at the steading. Thereafter the door was found so often open, and the cattle wandering about, that it was decided to replace the stone; after which, there was no trouble with open doors or straying cattle.

Often sickness among a herd followed the removal of a stone. Near Auchleven in Premnay, once stood a stone circle now destroyed. The farmer, who moved the stones, soon after lost many of his cattle and was ruined. The same fate overtook the bestial upon the farm of Cairnfauld in Durris, when the stones of the adjacent circle were carried away. In recent times, an attempt was made to employ in building the standing stones at Corrydown: the mason hurt his fingers: the stone was harder than was anticipated. Some one suggested it was unlucky to meddle with the stones. The workman agreed and ceased to use them.[1] These stories reveal the belief long cherished in the rustic mind that these megaliths were animate, and that they could wreak vengeance upon those who laid profane hands upon them. This was a primitive belief, but along with it went the conviction that sacred pillars could also help and bless. It was natural, therefore, that, regarding them from either point of view, man should seek to propitiate them by offerings, in the same way as he paid his homage to the sacred wells. There are traces of these offerings. Writing of the stone of Odin, Captain Thomas said that up to the time of its destruction in 1814 "it was customary to leave some offering on visiting the stone such as a piece of bread or cheese or rag or even a stone."[2] The custom would linger longest in an island

[1] For stories of sacred stones, see J. Ritchie, Some Antiquities of Aberdeenshire, 305 f.

[2] Captain Thomas in County Folk-Lore, III (O.S.), 2.

cut off from the main stream of life, and in connection with a stone held in such abiding veneration. In Heron's "Journey through Part of Scotland," he says: "In this river is a pool consecrated by the ancient superstition of the inhabitants of the country . . . the patients are conducted by their friends who first perform the ceremony of passing with them thrice through a neighbouring cairn: in this cairn they then deposit a simple offering of clothes or perhaps a small bunch of heath."[1] In well and tree and stone, the primitive rite is the same—the pilgrimage, the offering, and then the desired boon.

A remarkable instance of the worship of the sacred pillar appears in the records of the Presbytery of Elgin in the middle of the seventeenth century. Andro Man[2] in 1649 was accused of idolatry in setting up a stone and using some superstitious ceremonies to it, such as taking off his "bonat" to it. Like his namesake of Rathven who "laid off wards to the Hind Knyght," the Elgin man is engaged in perpetuating an ancient worship. Several witnesses deponed they saw Man, as he passed to the monolith, take off his "bonat," but whether in homage to the stone or not they could not say. Despite his protestations that it was intended as a march stone between him and his neighbours, two elders and four honest men were appointed to go and see the stone broken in pieces, a commission they faithfully performed. For two days later they reported to the Session that Andro Man had broken the stone in pieces.[3] It is difficult to imagine how such a charge could have originated, if there were not some foundation for it. The Church authorities, who had the best opportunity of knowing, were persuaded that the man was engaged in some forbidden act, some heathenish practice. It appears to be a survival of pillar worship. Besides, a boundary stone, such as Man alleged it to be, was originally a sacred stone, the habitation of divine power and life.[4] The old boundary stones in Scotland had marks of sanctity. As Martin says, "They preserve their boundaries from being liable to any debate by their successors thus: they lay a quantity of the ashes of burnt

[1] Brand, Antiquities, I, 282, quoting Heron.

[2] This Andro Man may have been a descendant of the Banffshire warlock who was an old man in 1597.

[3] Records of Elgin, II, 268.

[4] Cf. W. M. Ramsay. H.D.B., V, 110*b* f.

wood on the ground and put big stones above the same." [1] Even this was partially at least a religious rite. It was a survival of the religio terminorum of Rome, where fruits of the earth and ashes and bones of a victim were the foundation on which the stone was fixed.[2] More remarkable still is the story told by the late Bishop Chisholm, for it carries the practice down to the nineteenth century: "When the late Dr. Cooper took the farm of Auchorachan in Glenlivet, a neighbouring well-wisher walked solemnly round the farm march, reciting certain words, and placing in certain places upright stones. This was to keep off the evil eye, generally to bring good luck to the farm." [3] This incident took place 200 years later than the Elgin case, but there was the same ritual as that performed by Andrew Man. The upright stones were boundary stones; they also became the abode of guardian spirits who warded off all ill from the fields and cattle. To these sacred pillars, man rendered homage. This would tend to confirm Canon MacCulloch's dictum, "This would seem to show the Gauls had a cult of pillar stones associated with the god of boundaries." [4]

3. *Caves.*—Another natural object that has evoked the worship of the devotee is the sacred cave. In Greece, many sacred caves are known.[5] Acts performed in the cave show they were believed to be the peculiar seats of divine energy.[6] There are many holy caves still in Syria, supposed to be inhabited by a jinn or spirit. "One is resorted to by mothers who have an insufficient supply of milk for their children. A second is a place visited by married couples who are childless and desire offspring." [7] These were gifts to be expected from a nature religion and a nature deity. St. Geradine's Cave near Lossiemouth was a great resort for its healing virtues. The author of the "History of the Province of Moray," says: "A cave behind the village of Lossiemouth had in ancient times been formed into a small hermitage, not exceeding twelve feet square. It was completed by a handsome Gothic door and window, and commanded a long but solitary view along the eastern shore. These artificial

[1] Martin, Description, 611.
[2] Warde Fowler, Religious Experience of Roman People, 81.
[3] Chisholm, Banffshire Field Club (1884), 35.
[4] MacCulloch, Religion of the Celt, 285.
[5] Ramsay, H.D.B., V, 119*b*.
[6] Smith, Religion of Semites, 198. [7] Curtiss, *op. cit.*, 94 f.

decorations were torn down about thirty years ago by a rude shipmaster and in the course of working the quarries, the whole cave has been destroyed."[1] The hermitage was a later embellishment. The cave and its sanctity come from the pre-Christian period, and long after the establishment of the new faith, its curative powers continued to be eagerly sought. At a meeting of the Session of Elgin on 6th January, 1602, James and Margaret Hossack acknowledge they went "to saint Geretyne's cave bairfut and bareleggit." James said he had a sair arm which he "put in the soill," that is in the cave. He asserted he was no better of his visit to the cave, while his sister was never ill. He seems to have had faith enough to go to the cave, and make trial of its virtues. Another pilgrim had a better report to give. Cristen Farquhar, a married woman, confessed she had a sair leg which was the occasion of her going to the cave, and added she was the better of her visit to it.[2] It would appear as if the method of cure was by contact with the earth in the cave. Hossack put his affected arm into the soil, or sand. In February of the same year, Thomas James refused to take his oath that he would not go to the chapel well or cave. He defied the Session.[3] This shows that belief in the virtues of the cave must have been strongly held. Many pilgrims resorted thither in spite of the ban of the Church. Its importance is shown by being bracketed more than once in ecclesiastical decrees with the famous well of Spey. Both drew their votaries in spite of the veto of the Church. The Session pass an ordinance which shows how sorely troubled they were by pilgrimages to the chapel and cave. "It is specially appointed, decreed and ordained that sick persons within this parish as confessed their going to the idolatrous place of the Chapel at Speyside and to the cave beside the seaside at Stotfauld in superstitious pilgrimage shall be punished and censured in this sort, viz. that ilk ane of them shall make their public repentance in sackcloth ilk Sunday between Trinity Sunday next to come till the 1st day of August, thereafter barefoot and barelegged, sicklike to enter ilk Saturday during the space foresaid at seven hours in the morning in the steeple of S. Giles Kirk therein to remain in the ward that day, and that

[1] Shaw, History of Province, II, 62 f.
[2] Cramond, Elgin Kirk Session Records, 86.
[3] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 99.

night, till they enter on the morn to their public repentance, and ilk Sunday to be called in before the Session whereby they may ken how the Spirit of God has wrought with them, and also that they must swear never to do the like in times coming, and in the meantime that the said idolaters provide themselves habits of sackcloth upon their own expenses." [1] The citing before the Session every Sunday " to ken how the Spirit of God has wrought with them " is evidence of the stupendous efforts the Church was making to root out of the hearts of the parishioners what must have seemed to the rulers of the Church an almost ineradicable superstition. Sixty years later, the Synod of Moray is still concerned about the pilgrimages. At their meeting in October, 1663, it is recommended to inquire carefully anent such as superstitiously repair " to the Cove of Kineddar or the well of Grace." [2] The cave is still on the same platform as the well. The old nature worship does not readily die.

There is a sacred cave beyond Kessock Ferry, near the point of Kilmuir, Ross-shire, known as the dripping cave of Craig-a-Chowie. Water drips from the roof, and these drops even in modern times have been regarded as a complete cure for deafness and earache. The patient lies down on the floor of the cave and lets the water fall into first one ear, then another. Some " formalities " are observed. The patient departs cured. That this cave was " holy " ground is shown by the belief that of old it was inhabited by fairies. Cattle that strayed into the interior were carried off by the elves. Children that wandered in were never again seen. Only the needy suppliant—the true worshipper—might venture across its threshold.[3] These caves were sanctuaries, holy places, to which only the devout had access. There they registered their vows, paid their homage, with reverential awe, and received the boon they craved. There are traces of many such cases in France and Spain.[4]

[1] Cramond, Elgin Kirk Session Records, 87.

[2] Cramond, Extracts from Rec. Syn. Mor., 133.

[3] Caledonian Medical Journal. II (1896), 255—MacGregor. Old Highland Remedies, *ibid.*, V (1904)—Grant, Old Highland Therapy.

[4] Cf. Marett, Threshold of Religion, 216.

CHAPTER VI.

SPIRIT OF THE CORN.

A CUSTOM that obtained in Aberdeenshire till the nineteenth century was the "streeking the plough" in the autumn. When the plough was first put into the soil after harvest, a semi-religious rite was observed. About an hour after the plough was at work, the "guidwife," or principal female servant, proceeded to the field with bread, cheese, and a jar of home-brewed ale, or whisky. The cakes were usually specially prepared, being rubbed with cream before they were put on the girdle to be cooked. The ploughman would probably be the "guidman" or a son, for in many parishes each family tilled its own holding. The salutation to the man between the stilts was in the well-known form, "Guid speed the wark," to which he replied, "May Guid speed it." He then seated himself on the beam of the plough, and after sundry forms of good wishes for the health and prosperity of the family during the year for which he had just begun the labour, cut the cheese and partook of the dainties carried to the field. A piece of the oat-cakes was given to each horse. The whole household partook at supper of the bread and cheese. This was the form the custom took in Buchan.[1] Similar was its observance in the parish of Cairney. The guidwife brought bread and cheese to the field and a jar of ale, and treated the ploughman liberally, but previous to their partaking of anything, a piece of bread with a slice of cheese upon it was laid upon the plough's beam, "as a sort of oblation to Ceres, the protectress of agriculture." The following was the rite at Hallgreen in Cairney about 1843: "The plough feast consisted of milk porridge made of oatmeal and sweet milk, and bread and cheese. A kebback was broken for the occasion. The observance pointed back to the twal owsen plough, as the cattleman or herd-boy got the first

[1] Pratt, Buchan, 4th ed., 480 f.; Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, II, 330.

slice of the kebback and this slice was called the culter wedge, and was regarded as the goodman's perquisite. The porridge had to be of the proper consistency. If too thin, it was an omen of thin crops to come." [1] Here we have the offering to Ceres in the field, and the festive celebration in the evening. That the day on which the plough was put into the soil for the first time in the autumn was no ordinary day is shown by the account given to Dr. Gregor by Mr. Sim, Gateside, Strachan. Mr. Sim had the story from his servant. On the farm, where the ancient usage was followed, the man wished to start ploughing early in the week, but his master put him off each day till Saturday came. On Saturday he was told he need be in no hurry to begin. By the time he got to the field, his employer was there carrying bread, cheese, and a bottle of whisky. The old man drank a glass himself, then filled the glass again, and poured it over the bridle of the plough and repeated the words, "Weel fah the labour." A piece of bread and cheese was then carefully wrapped up in paper and firmly tied to the beam of the plough by the farmer, who at the same time laid strict injunctions upon the servant not to take it off. "It may fah aff o't sell, or the dogs may eht it. Nae maitter, but dinna ye touch it." When all was done and said the master added, "Noo jist tak ye anither fur and syne louse. Ye'll be ready for yir wark on Muninday's mornin'." [2] In the farmer's mind the Saturday ceremonial was distinct from the "wark" for which his man would be ready at the beginning of the week. Saturday seems to have been the proper day for the performance of the rite, as shown by the master's unwillingness to allow his servant to start earlier in the week. Mr. John Stuart of Herricks, Newmill, Keith, a native of Glenlivet, says the custom was observed by some there who took bread which had been blessed. Then it was put under the first furrow. He did not know if it was eaten or not. There is here in Upper Banffshire traces of the same ceremonial at the beginning of the ploughing for which there is abundant evidence in regard to Aberdeenshire. There may have been some variations in the different districts, but the general usage was to carry bread, often specially baked, and cheese, with ale or whisky to the field: these were partaken by the officiating ploughman and a representative of the home. A piece of the

[1] Jas. Pirie, Cairney, 143. [2] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, II, 330.

bread and cheese was put on the plough or in the furrow or thrown on the field. Later in the day there was often an evening festivity. This was termed the Pleuch Fehst. The "streeking of the plough," as it was named in the North, is the survival of an agricultural festival well known in antiquity. In ancient Greece, Demeter was invoked and propitiated by the Greek ploughmen before the autumnal ploughing and sowing. Then took place the offering of the first-fruits, not immediately after the harvest, but at the ceremonial that inaugurated the ploughing. This feast was called the Proerosia, i.e. Before the Ploughing.[1] No doubt this is a survival of a fertility rite or festival associated with the commencement of the ploughing. Besides the Grecian counterpart, other nations show traces of similar rites of consecration of the first ploughing and sowing. The Roman Feriae Sementivae seem to have fulfilled a like purpose. There were two feasts of the name, one before the autumn sowing, the other before the spring sowing.[2] In the Roman rite, cakes were offered and a pregnant sow sacrificed. Prayer was made for the protection of the seed from bird and beast and disease. The Chinese also had a ceremony of inauguration. "The great importance which the Chinese attach to the performance of rites for the fertility of the ground is proved by an ancient custom which is, or was till lately, observed every year in spring. On an appointed day the emperor himself, attended by the highest dignitaries of the State, guides with his own hand the ox-drawn plough down several furrows and scatters the seed in a sacred field or field of God as it is called. . . ."[3] The streeking of the plough is a remnant of an old nature festival which seems to have been of general observance wherever the land was cultivated. The preliminary object may be said to be to secure a prosperous harvest—that a blessing would attend the ploughing and sowing and that Demeter or Ceres or whoever he might be, the protector of the crops, would grant an abundant increase. But there was probably the complementary idea that by these offerings evil might be warded off. It is definitely stated that the Roman prayed that his seed might be protected from every malign influence, and a case is reported from Orkney

[1] Cf. Frazer, Spirits of the Corn, I, 45, 48, 50.
[2] Warde Fowler, The Roman Festivals, 294, note 4.
[3] Frazer, Spirits of the Corn, II, 14.

which seems to show that peculiar dangers surrounded the first putting the plough into the soil. The first day that a farmer yoked his plough, a woman "by her witchcraft and develrie, so distempered the pleuche and gudis, that he could gett no labour of thame."[1] The cutting the first furrow required the propitiation of the Corn Spirit that he might ward off all malevolent powers from plough and oxen. That the work might be successfully inaugurated, sacrifices were made and prayers offered. With the streeking of the plough in the North-East of Scotland may be compared the rustic festival in England known as Plough Monday, and held on the first Monday after the 12th day of January. The plough was dressed with ribbons and dragged round by a number of youths. Verses were recited in which occurred the words, "God speed the plough." The lads expected bread and cheese and ale.[2] The Scottish ceremonial was a movable festival; the English rite was observed on a fixed day. Marks of greater antiquity attended the Scottish celebration, but both subserved the same purpose.

The North-East also provides a most interesting survival in connection with the cutting of the last sheaf of the harvest—"the clyack sheaf." Much has been written about this relic of an earlier religious rite. The most exhaustive account of what happened in North Aberdeenshire is that given by Dr. Gregor in "Quelques coûtumes du Nord-est du Comté d'Aberdeen," contributed to the "Revue des Traditions populaires," III, 532-5, October, 1888, and translated by Sir James Frazer:—

"The last sheaf cut is the object of much care: the manner of cutting it, binding it, and carrying it to the house varies a little in the different districts. The following customs have been reported to me by people who have seen them or who have practised them, and some of the customs have now disappeared. The information comes from the parishes of Pitsligo, Aberdour, and Tyrie, situated in the North-East corner of the county of Aberdeen, but the customs are not limited to these parishes. Some particulars relating to the sheaf may be noted as always the same, thus (*a*) it is cut and gathered by the youngest person present in the field, the person who is supposed to be the purest; (*b*) the sheaf is not allowed to touch the ground; (*c*) it is made up and carried in triumph to

[1] Dalyell, Darker Superstitions, 268.
[2] Thistleton Dyer, British Popular Customs, 40 f.

the house; (*d*) it occupies a conspicuous place in the festivals which follow the end of reaping; (*e*) it is kept till Christmas morning and is then given to one or more of the horses or to the cattle of the farm.

"Before the introduction of the scythe, the corn was cut by sickle or heuck, a kind of curved sickle. The last sheaf was shorn or cut by the youngest girl present.

"As the corn might not touch the ground, the master or 'gueedman' sat down, placed the band on his knees, and received thereupon each handful as it was cut. The sheaf was bound, dressed as a woman, and when it had been brought to the house, it was placed in some part of the kitchen where everybody could see it during the meal which followed the end of the reaping. This sheaf was called the clyack sheaf.

"The manner of receiving and binding the last sheaf is not always the same. Here is another: three persons hold the band in their hands, one of them at each end, while the third holds the knot in the middle. Each handful of corn is placed so that the cut end is turned to the breast of those who support the ears on the opposite side. When all is cut, the youngest boy ties the knot. Two other bands are fastened to the sheaf, one near the cut end, the other near the ears. The sheaf is carried to the house by those who have helped to cut or bind it (Aberdour).

"Since the introduction of the scythe, it is the youngest boy who cuts the last sheaf. My informant (a woman) told me that when he was not strong enough to wield the scythe, his hand was guided by another. The youngest girl gathers it. When it is bound with three bands, it is cut straight and it is not allowed to touch the ground. The youngest girls carry it to the house. My informant (a woman) told me that she had seen it decked and placed at the head of the bed. Formerly, and still sometimes, there was always a bed in the kitchen (Tyrie).

"The corn is not allowed to fall on the ground: the young girls who gather it take it by the ear and convey it, handful by handful, till the whole sheaf is cut. A woman who 'has lost a feather of her wing,' as an old woman put it to me, may not touch it. Sometimes also they merely put the two hands round the sheaf (New Deer).

"Generally a feast and dance follow when all the wheat is

cut. This feast and dance bear the name of clyack or 'meal and ale.' However, some people do not give 'meal and ale' till all the cut corn has been got in: then the feast is called 'winter,' and they say that a farmer 'has the winter' when all his sheaves have been carried home.

"At this feast two things are indispensable: a cheese called the clyack-kebback and 'meal and ale.' The cheese clyack-kebback must be cut by the master of the house. The first slice is larger than the rest: it is known by the name 'the kanave's faang'—the young man's big slice—and it is generally the share of the herd-boy (Tyrie).

"The dish called 'meal and ale' is made as follows. You take a suitable vessel, whether an earthenware pot or a milk bowl, if the crockery is scanty, but if on the contrary the family is well-off, they use other special utensils. In each dish, ale is poured and treacle is added to sweeten it. Then oatmeal is mixed with the sweetened ale, till the whole is of a sufficient consistency. The cook adds whisky to the mixture in such proportion as she thinks fit. In each plate is put a ring. To allow the meal time to be completely absorbed, the dish is prepared on the morning of the feast. At the moment of the feast, the dish or dishes containing the strong and savoury mixture are set on the middle of the table. But it is not served up till the end. Six or seven persons generally have a plate to themselves. Each of them plunges his spoon into the plate as fast as possible in the hope of getting the ring: for he who is lucky enough to get it will be married within the year. Meantime some of the stuff is swallowed, but often in the struggle some of it is spilt on the table or the floor.

"In some districts there used to be, and still is, dancing in the evening of the feast. The 'sheaf' figured in the dances. It was dressed as a girl and carried on the back of the mistress of the house to the barn or granary which served as a ball-room. The mistress danced a reel with 'the sheaf' on her back.

"The woman who gave me this account had been a witness of what she described when she was a girl. The sheaf was afterwards carefully stored till the first day of Christmas when it was given to eat to a mare in foal, if there was one on the farm, or if there was not, to the oldest cow in calf. Elsewhere the sheaf was divided between all the cows and their calves or between

all the horses and the cattle of the farm (related by an eye-witness)." [1]

Dr. Gregor gives here a complete account of the customs associated with the harvest in the North-Eastern corner of Aberdeenshire. The same customs were observed in other parts of the country. In central Banffshire in my own experience the clyack sheaf was tied with three bands, and brought up to the manse door. It had been cut and gathered on the glebe, and was left with instructions that it was to be kept till Yule and then given to the cow in calf. In the upper districts of Banffshire, as at Glenlivet, the sheaf was made in the form of a cross. Here is the influence of the Catholic religion. In Kincardineshire, Mrs. Farquhar, Viewfield, Rickarton, tells of how in her youth there was a great contest to see who would get to cut and gather the maiden. She was deposited above the fireplace in the kitchen and kept till Christmas, when she was given to a cow in calf. Mr. William Mackie says he has often cut the maiden, who was gathered and tied up in the form of a cross, the ends being carefully trimmed. She was tied with ribbons, sometimes being dressed in a skirt. A specially fine part of the field was left to be cut for the maiden, one having a fine head of grain. The girl who gathered held the top of the grain carefully so that none fell to the ground during the cutting. The maiden was kept till Old Christmas Day and then given to the best cow in the byre. He who led off the dance in the evening had the maiden attached to his breast when he danced. This is important evidence as to the primitive nature of the rite. The careful reserving of the best of the field for the maiden, the care that none of the grain cut should touch the ground, and the dancing with the corn goddess, are marks of a very early religious rite, in which great veneration is shown to the corn spirit. These witnesses are important as providing evidence that the rites associated with the maiden were observed half a century later than hitherto generally believed.

In Morayshire, the handful of corn last gathered was done up in the form of an effigy and carried to the farmhouse in a kind of triumphal procession by the company of harvesters. On reaching the steading, all assembled in the kitchen where they

[1] Frazer, Spirits of the Corn, II, 158-161.

were regaled with bread and cheese and whisky. The clyack sheaf was known either as the maiden or the Carline, the former when the harvest was early, the latter when late.[1]

In Northumberland a more distinctive reverence was shown to the "kern baby." The custom there is described by Mr. Wm. Henderson: "When the sickle is laid down and the last sheaf of golden corn set on end, it is said they have 'got the kern.' The reapers announce the fact with loud shouting, and an image is at once hoisted on a pole and given into the charge of the strongest and tallest man of the party. The image is crowned with wheat ears and dressed up in gay finery, a white frock and coloured ribbons being its conventional attire. The whole group circle round this harvest queen or kern baby, curtseying to her and dancing and singing: and thus they proceed to the farmer's barn, where they set the image up on high, as the presiding goddess of their revels, and proceed to do justice to the harvest supper."[2] Here homage is distinctly offered to the harvest queen or goddess.

In North Germany, it was once the practice at harvest time to leave a bunch of grain standing in the field, round which the reapers danced, throwing up their caps and crying "Waul, waul, waul" or "Wol, wol, wol." Thorpe says this Wol is a corruption of Wod (Woden).[3]

The clyack sheaf seems universal. It is known as the Corn Baby in India, where it is a general institution save among the Mohammedans. Made from the last corn reaped, it is tied to a bamboo pole and erected on a heap of corn ready for winnowing.[4]

The Spirit of the Corn, as of other nature spirits, might sometimes appear in animal guise. "It was believed by some," says Dr. Gregor, "that a very mysterious animal, which when met by the reapers among the corn had the appearance of a grey stone, but which could change its shape, lived among the corn. When met with, a small quantity of the crop was left standing around it, and the ears of grain only were cut off."[5] The harvesters, even after the introduction of the scythe, would cut round any fine patch of grain from which the maiden was to be gathered:

[1] James Spence, Buchan Field Club, V, 217.
[2] Henderson, Folk-Lore, 87.
[3] Thorpe, Northern Mythology, III, 141.
[4] Rev. F. Kilbey in Folk-Lore, 32, 215 f.
[5] Gregor, Notes, 181.

Naturally any four-footed creature that had been lodging in the field would be driven to the centre as the workers bent to their task. They would have occasional glimpses of it as they were thus employed. But before they had got to the clyack sheaf, it might escape, leaving in the harvesters' minds an eerie feeling that here was some mysterious creature dwelling among the corn —elusive and never clearly visible.

One other practice must be noticed. The man who took the last grain from the field was in some districts called the winter. Every one strove to avoid this task. "The unfortunate winter was the subject of a good deal of teasing and was dressed up in all the old clothes that could be got about the farm, and placed 'in the bink' to eat his supper." [1] In Caithness the person who cut the last sheaf was called the winter, and retained the name till the next harvest.[2]

The fertilising power of the corn spirit is shown by the clyack sheaf in which it was embodied being given to a mare in foal or a cow in calf. The primitive nature of the religion of which these customs are survivals is evidenced by the fact that there is no priesthood, no temple, no gods.[3] "Compared with the corn mother of Germany, and the harvest maiden of Scotland, the Demeter and Persephone of Greece are later products of religious growth." [4] The rites associated with the clyack sheaf have a long-drawn history. Even the "meal and ale," once so familiar an institution, when the clyack sheaf was gathered or when the farmer had "winter," has its prototype in the classical world. "And in the gruel of oatmeal and ale," says Sir James Frazer, "which the harvesters sup with spoons as an indispensable part of the harvest supper, have we not the Scotch equivalent of the gruel of barley-meal and water, flavoured with penny royal, which the initiates at Eleusis drank as a solemn form of communion with the Barley Goddess Demeter? May not that mystic sacrament have originated in a simple harvest supper held by Eleusinian farmers at the end of the reaping?" [5] In this comparison there might also be kept in mind the simple rite often observed when a "mayler o' meal" was brought home.

[1] Gregor, Notes, 182.
[2] J. Macdonald, Religion and Myth, 141.
[3] Frazer, Spirits of the Corn, II, 169.
[4] *Ibid.*, II, 207. [5] *Ibid.*, II, 161.

When a farmer or crofter took home his meal from the mill, sometimes a little of it was mixed with sugar and whisky and each of the household got a small portion. It was a sort of inauguration meal, a sacramental participation. It was then carefully packed into the "mehl girnal" or "meal bowie." When the meal was brought home from the mill a "bossiefu" or part was given to a poor neighbour.[1]

[1] Gregor, Buchan Field Club, III. 139.

CHAPTER VII.

FAIRIES.

Besides the spirits that inhabit well, river, stream, tree, and stone, to whom man offered homage, there were other spirits which might be named earth spirits, which tenanted the little green knolls, spirits that were usually invisible to mortal eye, but at times made themselves known in human form. They could hardly be regarded as divine, yet they had more than human qualities, and man had felt it wise to appease them by offerings. These spirits were named "fairies," a designation, however, which was displeasing to them. It was wise in speaking of them to refer to them as "the fair folks" or "the guid neebors":—

Gin ye ca' me imp or elf
I rede ye look well to yourself.
Gin ye ca' me fairy
I'll work ye muckle tarrie [i.e. trouble].
Gin guid neibour ye ca' me
Then guid neibour I will be,
But gin ye ca' me seelie wicht
I'll be your friend baith day and nicht.[1]

The fairies were a race of beings that dwelt underground. Their habitations, called fairy dwellings, were known by their rounded form and peculiarly green appearance. Elf-hill and Elf-hillock, names that still survive, betray their origin. Beside the knolls were the fairy greens, bright green circlets of grass, on which on moonlight nights, the fairies issuing from their subterranean abode, danced and made merry. These greens must not be cultivated. That would bring misfortune to man and beast:—

[1] Chambers. Popular Rhymes, 324.

He wha tills the fairies' green
Nae luck again shall hae:
And he wha spills the fairies' ring
Betide him want and wae.
For weirdless days and weary nights
Are his till his deein' day.
But he wha gaes by the fairy ring,
Nae dule nor pine shall see,
And he wha cleans the fairy ring
An easy death shall dee.[1]

An example of the evil that befell the man who tampered with the fairy brochs was seen in Caithness when a murrain fell upon his cattle and he had to resort to the needfire to stay the plague.[2]

The fairies held their merry revels during the twilight hour, or under the pale moon, but they were rarely seen during the day. Underground in the fairy brochs, there were seasons of high revelry when the divinest music could be heard coming through the open door, and the elves made merry in the dance. Such an occasion was one of peril for mortals. The fairies took singular pleasure in alluring the lonely traveller into their enchanted ring, and into the open door of their dwelling. Two young men in Deeside were returning home on Halloween night, each with a jar of whisky on his back, and, seeing an opening, entered a fairy dwelling. There was music and dancing. One, without laying down his burden, joined the dancers. The other, suspecting the place and company, stuck a needle into the door as he entered and thus got away when he liked. The former was left behind. His companion, returning a year later, found him still dancing with the whisky on his back. When brought to the open air he was only skin and bone.

The fairies had a queen, the Queen of Elfin, who kept a royal court. She was believed to be subject to Satan, and had to pay teind in kind. The thought of this became a haunting dread to the denizens of fairy land.

There came a wind oot o' the north
A sharp wind and a snell.
And a dead sleep came over me,
And frae my horse I fell.
The Queen of Fairies she was there
And took me to hersel'.
And never would I tire, Janet,
In fairyland to dwell.

[1] Chambers, Popular Rhymes, 324.

[2] See pp. 30 f.

But aye at every seven years,
They pay the teind to hell.
And though the Queen mak's muckle o' me
I fear 't will be mysel.

There was also supposed to be a King of Fairyland, who left the management of affairs to his wife. This belief is reflected in the confessions at the witch trials. Isobel Gowdie, Auldearn, in 1662, testified: "I was in Downie Hills, and got meat there from the Queen of the Fairies more than I could eat. The queen is brawly clothed in white linen, and in white and brown cloth: and the king is a braw man, well favoured and broad-faced. There were plenty of elf bulls rowting and skoyling up and down and affrighted me."[1] Elf-land was a counterpart of earth.

The fairies while possessing superhuman powers and qualities also shared our human nature. They were small in size and perpetuated their race. Though often regarded as ethereal beings with the power of becoming invisible at will, yet they ate and drank like mortals. Sometimes a man formed an alliance with a Banshi, a fairy woman, but though the marriage might prove happy for a time, no lasting good came of the unnatural union. In the end the fairy wife usually disappeared.

The good fairies, "the seelie court," were well-disposed to man, rendering him help in his extremity. They provided bread for the poor householder, and seed corn for the impoverished crofter. Some men invoked their aid in the performance of their daily task. There was an Aberdeenshire farmer who had a noted thresher. It was in the days of the flail which meant hard labour and beginning the day early. The farmer, thinking his man's skill was more than mortal, hid himself in the barn. The thresher appeared at the usual hour of three o'clock in the morning, trimmed his lamp, placed the sheaves on the floor and took hold of the flail. Before beginning he looked round and said, "Come awa', ma reed caippies." In an instant the sheaves began to tumble "from the moo" into the threshing floor. The fairies were hard at work and soon finished the day's threshing. The master waited till all was quiet, and then left the barn. He said nothing at the time, but parted with the man at the earliest opportunity.[2] It was regarded as uncanny to have a

[1] Pitcairn, Criminal Trials, III, 604.
[2] Gregor, Folk-Lore Record, I, 28.

man about the farm who was in such manifest league with these supernatural beings.

The fair folks always remembered a kindness. Gratitude was a strong trait in their character. What they borrowed they punctually repaid. A fairy in Buchan borrowed "a hathish o' meal" from a poor woman who had little to spare. It was duly repaid, and when, owing to a long snowstorm, there was a dearth in the land, the meal in the girnal never grew less. It was like the oil in the widow's cruse.[1]

A fairy accosted a farmer in Strathspey when sowing his corn. She asked him to sing her a song, and also to give her a present of corn. In return, his seed would never fail him. He sowed half his crop that year, and the seed in his sack never diminished. Then his wife intervened, and the spell was broken.[2]

The fairies were capricious and very resentful of an insult. In the south-west of Aberdeenshire, a shepherd's cottage at the head of a glen adjoined a fairy mound. One day the young wife was alarmed by a visit from an imperious little lady in bright green with a long wand in her hand. "A'm sayin', mistress, ye maunna throw yer foul watter my gate ony mair. I winna thole't ony langer, for ye're makin' a jaw-hole o' ma best chaumers in below the green, blaudin' ilka thing, forbye pittin' oot ma bit spunk o' fire. Throw yer foul watter anither airt—dae ye hear me? I gie ye advisement evenoo—gin ye dinna stop it, ye sall fairly rue it." The affrighted woman promised, but when she was ill, her substitute pitched the slops on the forbidden spot. The consequence was the shieling mysteriously took fire and was consumed. A new cottage was built at a distance from the fairy folk.[3] This story is from a correspondent in Melbourne —but he had it from an aged crone, who told it as a veritable fact. It reveals the outlook that prevailed a hundred years ago amongst a certain class.

Another instance of their resenting insult or injury also comes from Deeside. The fairies lived in the Seely Howe, a hollow in the Carne Hillock upon the estate of Blelack. Before leaving for the wars of the '45, the Laird determined to dislodge them from his land. For that purpose he employed a noted magician,

[1] Gregor, Notes, 63.
[2] Grant Stewart, Popular Superstitions, 125 f.
[3] *Aberdeen Journal*, Notes and Queries, III (1910), 25.

John Farquharson, tacksman in Parks. But the fairies refused to obey his spell till he should assign them another place of abode. This he eventually did by sending them to the Hill of Fare at Banchory. Disliking their new quarters, they pronounced this malison upon Gordon :—

> Dool, dool to Blelack
> And dool to Blelack's heir
> For driving us from the Seely Howe
> To the cauld hill o' Fare.

The imprecation of the fairies upon Farquharson was still more eldritch :—

> While corn and girss grows to the air
> John Farquharson and his seed shall thrive nae mair.

Matters went ill with the Gordons, and Farquharson left his native land never to return.[1]

A curious parallel to the obligation to find a new residence for the fairies on their removal occurs in connection with a charm employed to remove rats from an estate in Morven. If the spell was to succeed, some other place of abode must be assigned to the rodents. This place was generally separated from the locality whence they were expelled by a mountain chain, a loch, river, or arm of the sea. One can readily understand this qualification. It was designed to prevent their return, but the provision of a new home for them places them on the level of the fairies, and may point back to an age when all the underground creatures were regarded as more closely kin than they are to-day.

The bad fairies, "the unseelie court," worked much evil. Man must be careful in case he came within their power. Fairy knots were one of the means employed by the elves to accomplish this. The fairies, as they danced round the Hallow fires, unseen by man, kept casting knots of blue ribbon with their left hands and throwing them over their left shoulder. The knots could not be unloosed. Those fascinated with their beauty and foolish enough to lift them, came under the power of the "fair folk" and were liable to be carried off at any moment.[2] The worst characteristic of the unseelie court was their thieving propen-

[1] Jervise, Epitaphs, I, 281 f. [2] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, I, 55.

sities. They abstracted the goods of mortals and carried them to their subterranean abodes. Old Auchriachan, near Tomintoul, always said a blessing over his stock and goods, with the result that the fairies could get none of his possessions. One day, however, when he was lost, they had their revenge and carried off his best ox and new baken bread that were unblessed.[1]

The hostile fairies were particularly feared for their habit of carrying off the unsained mother and child. The mother they desired because of their fondness for human milk; the children they carried off to pay "the teind of hell." So conscious were the people of this peril that a policy of constant watchfulness was pursued, and various expedients adopted to frustrate their designs. But occasionally a weary nurse would fall asleep, forgetting the fairy peril. It was the elves' opportunity. The mother was taken and in her place, and bearing her resemblance, was left a stock of wood. In place of the infant, when it was carried away, was deposited an unthriving misshapen fairy brat. Soon it revealed itself for what it was. Peevish, always crying and complaining, beginning to show many deformities, dwining, the parents began to realise it was no child of theirs. Their child had been stolen. This was a fairy changeling. Martin Luther believed in changelings. "Changelings (wechsebäge) and kielkropfs Satan lays in the place of the genuine children that people may be tormented with them."[2] The belief that some demon carried off children goes back to the distant past. In ancient Babylonia there was a female demon or rather a class of demons called Labartu, supposed to be peculiarly dangerous to mothers and children. A special series of incantations was employed to ward them off.[3] In Scotland, too, man took measures to guard his home and family from the elfin danger. Iron was a potent preservative. "Iron scares spirits." The belief springs from the time when iron was a new and mysterious metal. In the case of women in childbed, the safeguard took the form sometimes of a row of iron nails in the front board of the bed, sometimes of a smoothing iron, sometimes of a reaping-hook placed under the bed or in the window. Even a sword might be laid across the couch.

[1] Grant Stewart, Popular Superstitions, 127 ff.
[2] Cf. Thorpe, Northern Mythology, II, xxi.
[3] Morris Jastrow, Religion of Babylonia, in H.D.B., V, 5516.

At Elgin in 1668 John Innes of Blackhills appeared before the Presbytery on a charge of "counter-charming" by putting a dirk betwixt the lock and the bar of the Church door while the minister was celebrating his brother's marriage. This was done to prevent any "prejudice" occurring.[1] The fairies or the witches were the enemies he was guarding against.

The rowan, too, was as effectual against the fairies as against the witches. A rowan cross in the child's garments or a red thread tied about its neck was a sure protective.[2] A small brooch of the shape of a heart worn on one of the petticoats, usually behind, also proved an efficient shield.[3] In this case the metal would constitute the safeguard. The dislike of the elfin race to iron was so great that it might be used as a potent weapon against them. If a man by chance found himself in a fairy dwelling, he should stick a piece of steel, a knife, or needle or fish hook in the door. Then the underground denizens would not be able to shut the door till he came out again.

If, in spite of all precautions, a child was carried off through a nurse's forgetfulness and a fairy brat left in its place, there were various means which might be adopted to secure the return of the true child. The underlying principle was: expose the changeling to peril of life, and rather than see their own offspring suffer, the fairies would come to its rescue and bring back the human babe.

There was the trial by fire. The hearth was piled with peat; soon there was a blazing fire, the suspected changeling was placed as near it as possible without being scorched, or it was hung on the crook over the fire. If it was a fairy child, it made its escape by the lum.[4] This resembles the Danish rite where the mother heated her oven very hot and said loud enough for the Troll folk to hear, "I am going to burn my child." These words she repeated three times, and made preparations to carry out her purpose. Then the subterranean woman rushed in and rescued her brat, returning the human babe.[5]

As recently as 1845 a girl in Wick was subjected to the fire

[1] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 372.
[2] Grant Stewart, Popular Superstitions, 114.
[3] Gregor, Echo, 92.
[4] Gregor, Notes, 8; Folk-Lore Journal, I (1883), 56.
[5] Thorpe, Northern Mythology, II, 175.

ordeal. She was placed in a basket along with shavings of wood, and suspended over the fire. The shavings were ignited but the girl was removed from the fire uninjured. In restoring her to her friends, the operator remarked that she was not half so witch-like since she had been singed.[1]

Her fate was happier than that of the poor woman who in 1895 was placed upon the kitchen fire by her own family at Baltry Vadhen in Ireland, near Clonmel, and burned to death. The belief was that the real wife and mother had been taken away and a fairy changeling substituted. When the ordeal of fire was applied, it was believed the changeling would vanish and the wife be restored.[2]

In the Lewis, the peril to which the changeling was exposed was different. When the tide was out, it was laid down on the beach close to the water. No attention was paid to its screams. The fairies rather than let it be drowned by the incoming tide, took it away and restored the child they had stolen.[3] The summit of a hill might be recognised as a place of exposure for doubtful children. Latterly, indeed, it was usually some association of the knoll with the elves that gave it this peculiar virtue as a place of exchange, but it may originally have acquired this character, because a night's exposure on the hill was so perilous to a child, that if a changeling, the fairies would come to its succour. What happened when the infant was no fairy brat is revealed in a story from Ardersier. In that parish, about the year 1730, a man named Munro had a sickly child, which he and his neighbours believed had been substituted for his own. There is a conical knoll in the carse called Tom Earnais or Henry's Knoll, the scene of fairy revels. Munro placed his child on this hillock, and in the morning found it a corpse.[4] The Rev. James Rust, minister of Slains (who died in 1874), tells the story of another changeling who had a happier fate. " I knew the woman, Mary Findlay, who died a few years ago at a great age, who was the last person laid down at the cairn [the Lykar Cairn] because she was believed to be an elfin changeling." The practice was to lay the child down at the cairn after sunset and leave it there

[1] Rogers, Social Life, III, 329.
[2] Summers, Geography of Witchcraft, 100.
[3] Mitchell, P.S.A.S., IV (1862), 286
[4] Guthrie, Old Scottish Customs, 121.

all night, the relatives watching at a distance. There was also a peace-offering, such as bread, butter, cheese, milk, eggs, fish or fowl, presented at the same time, with some incantations. If the offering disappeared by morning, it was a sign that the fairies were appeased and that the human child had been restored.[1]

The Lykar Cairn was sacred from of old. Its association with the fairies rendered it a most appropriate place for making an exchange. A fairy well might also be a place of exchange.

There are other references to propitiating the fairies. The cheese well on Minchmoor in Peebleshire was so-called from the pieces of cheese thrown into it by passers-by as offerings to the fairies.[2] These peace-offerings might be made at a well or at a cairn, as at the Lykar Cairn, or on a knoll. On 9th September, 1656, the brethren of the Presbytery of Dingwall took into consideration "the abominations within the parish of Gairloch in sacrificing of beasts on 25th August, as also in pouring of milk upon hills as oblations."[3] This may refer to the pouring of milk upon fairy knowes for the purpose of appeasing the underground dwellers.

About the same date as the occurrence in Slains, another method was employed in the parish of Abernethy. The substitute was deposited for the night at the junction of the three shires (sometimes it was at the confluence of three rivers), and in the morning the fairies would have the true child restored. In 1829 there was living in Abernethy a woman who was thus exposed as an infant at the conjunction of the counties of Inverness, Moray, and Banff.[4]

The fairies also did injury to cattle, particularly by slaying them with the fairy dart. When an animal died suddenly and no natural cause could be assigned, its death was attributed to a "fairy daert." In this event, the canny man or woman of the district was sent for to search for the "daert." In due course it was found to the great satisfaction of the owner.[5] But even when the canny man had ceased to be, belief in elf-shot remained, and the absence of the flint arrow-head was duly explained. In the autumn of 1844 "I met the son of a noted smuggler on

[1] Rust, Druidism, 32 ff. [2] Mackinlay, Folk-Lore, 190.
[3] Mackay, Inverness, 282.
[4] Grant Stewart, Popular Superstitions, 115.
[5] Gregor, Notes, 184.

the Buchan coast. He was usually frank and affable, but in this instance he was cast down. Asked how it fared with him, he said, ' I've gotten an ill job this mornin' in the deth o' a fine stirk by elf-shot, an' the pity is he wasna fasent to a hairn tether (a halter made of hair) fan the wapin wad a fa'en short o'm.' I asked, ' Are you sure it was not quarter-ill your stirk died of ? ' He said, ' That could na be : my neebor an' me opent up the beast, an' there was a hole through his hert.' I replied, ' What about the flint arrow ? Did you find it ? ' He said they were never to be found where the victims fell." [1]

These fairy darts are really the points of flint used for arming the arrows of our far-back ancestors, but the popular belief was that they were shot by the fairies. Outwardly they caused no visible hole or wound in the skin. But some people pretended they could feel the hole where the dart entered, even though there was no external mark. If summoned in time, a canny woman might be able to effect a cure. Such an one was summoned in a Shetland case. She felt the ailing cow all over, found a dimple in its skin opposite its heart. She tore a leaf out of the Bible, wrapped up a part with a verse on it as a pellet, and pressed it into the dimple. After waiting a little, she withdrew the pellet. In a few days the cow revived.[2]

These elf arrow-heads were sometimes worn as amulets. An Orcadian carried one of them night and day, suspended by a cord round the neck. It was reckoned a charm against the fairies.[3] The belief that certain diseases among cattle were due to the elves also obtained in Norway.[4]

While the fairy darts once formed part of the fighting equipment of an early, almost forgotten race, it is long ages since they were reckoned magical. In ancient Etruria their points were set as amulets in the gold of the Etruscan necklaces.[5] As to the origin of belief in the fairies, more than one factor contributed. The belief in the flint arrow-heads as elf bolts or fairy darts seems to point back to an early race who used weapons of stone and were driven back to the hills, for the knolls are believed to be their habitations. Further, the presentation of

[1] S.N. and Q., V (1892), 178 ff.
[2] County Folk-Lore, III (O. and S.), 40 f.
[3] *Ibid.*, 38 f. [4] Thorpe, *op. cit.*, I, 25.
[5] Lang, Custom and Myth. 10.

offerings to the fairies, whether at well or cairn or stone, seems to suggest that the belief is associated with the worship of local spirits. The testimony of the witches points to fairyland as an underground replica of the world above.[1]

Belief in the fairies continued for long to colour man's thought and speech. In Birse a phrase was still employed in 1865 when anyone was long absent. "You hae surely been in Elfin or Elflan."[2] A young man in Nether Buckie, about a hundred years ago, was sent by his father for a chappin of ale and did not return for a year. During that period he had been living with the fairies.[3] Often it was expedient to foster belief in these elfin visitors. By those in high place, paternity was sometimes ascribed to them and disgrace avoided, but even those in humbler spheres pled guilty to disporting with them. An old shoemaker living in Tomintoul confessed he had some dalliances with a "lanan shi" in his younger days.[4] Last century, too, an old woman in Banffshire acknowledged she had acquired an unusual cure for illness from a wife, who had been spirited away by the fairies, and had lived with then underground for eight years. Questioned as to the habits of the fairies, she preserved a mysterious silence. "Oh it wasna safe to be talking o' the gude folk: maybe they wad be spiriting her awa' next."[5] Here the witch is employing the belief in fairies to add to her own prestige.

The Brownie.

Different from the fairies or elves were the brownies, so named from their swarthy complexion. They were diminutive creatures who often became attached to a family and rendered willing and devoted service in the home. They represent the hearth spirits of the ancients—the lares of Rome.

> Whan thair was corne to thrashe or dichte,
> Or barn or byre to clene,
> He had ane bizzy houre at nichte
> Atween the twall and ane.

[1] Cf. Lang, Introduction to Kirk's Secret Commonwealth, lxv.
[2] Dinnie, Birse, 36. [3] Hutcheson, Days of Yore, 28.
[4] Grant Stewart, *op. cit.*, 108.
[5] Gordon Cumming. In the Hebrides, 176.

Brownie proved not only a valuable house servant but also helped outside with the flocks and herds. His services were given in a disinterested spirit. Any offer of recompense was regarded by him as a hint to go. The last brownie in Glenlivet was a female who made the farmhouse of Achnarrow her abode about the middle of last century. She was known by the name of Meg Mholach or Hairy Meg on account of her abundant hair. Her mistress, one day entertaining visitors, regretted the absence of cheese upon the table. No sooner had she mentioned the fact than two large kebbacks came rolling to her feet, and a voice sang out, "anything more." Grant Stewart identifies this brownie with one of the two brownies in the family of Tullochgorm. The male was known as Brownie Clod from his habit of flinging clods at people. The female was Maug Vulucht, Hairy Mag, a sort of mistress over the servants—the familiar of the house. What she called for came floating through the air and lighted upon the table.[1]

[1] Cf. R. H. Calder, Banffshire Field Club, 1914, 9, 13; Grant Stewart, *op. cit.*, 142 f.

CHAPTER VIII.

LARES.

The worship of Nature was celebrated in the great fire festivals. It also found expression in the homage offered to venerated objects believed to be animate or the abode of indwelling spirits. But it might also be seen in the ritual observances of the home. The fire on the hearth had a peculiar sanctity. In the earliest times it was derived from the new fire kindled afresh at the great festivals or on the occasion of lighting the sacred flame to check a murrain. Virtue still attached to fire even when the old way of raising it ceased to be practised. Thus it was customary in many parts of Buchan for a tenant, when removing from one farm to another to carry along with him "kindling," i.e. live peats, with which to raise a fire in the new home.[1] One of the charges against Janet Leask in 1597 was that though there was a distance of two miles between the houses, she carried a coal of fire from her old home to the new, and this though she could have got "kindling" at a house within half a mile of her new abode.[2] In the end of the sixteenth century this was reckoned witchcraft, which embraced in the ecclesiastical mind all that was foreign to the rites of the Church. But by the nineteenth century, it was considered one of the harmless customs observed by those who kept up the traditions of the fathers. It was really carrying the lares to the new home.

In many districts it was believed most unlucky to give a neighbour, whose "ristit" fire had gone out, a light in the morning. On special days, such as New Year's Day, almost no consideration would induce a householder to give it. A fisherman who resided at Bridgend, Buckie, met a boy coming out of his house on the first day of the year with a glowing peat, for the purpose of kindling a fire in a shoemaker's shop. In the greatest wrath the

[1] Pratt, Buchan (4th ed.), 488. [2] Sp. Misc., I, 135.

seaman admonished his wife for allowing the lad to take away the fire, saying he would not catch a fish that year. As it turned out he proved most successful.[1] This is a survival from the age when all fires, having been extinguished, were relit from the sacred flame. Once lit, they ought never to be allowed to go out till the special season or occasion recurred for the renewal of the fires on the hearth. To give away this gift of the gods would surely bring misfortune. In 1597 Margaret Clerk of Lumphanan was convicted of going to the house of William Ross in Bogloch and taking a fire peat out of the same and carrying it to her own home. Soon after William Ross and the daughter of Janet Beith departed this life.[2]

On the Moray Firth coast there were relics of some pristine act of worship in a New Year's Day ceremonial. The fisher folks went down to the shore, filled a vessel with salt water and carried it home along with some sea ware, "bell war." The water was then sprinkled on the fire, and the seaweed put on the tops of the doors and corners of the house. This ensured luck all the year.[3] The sprinkling with water looks like a fertility rite. The water may have been designed to ensure success, and the "bell war" to bar the entrance of evil spirits.

Seaweed was also carried home by farmers as manure. There was great anxiety to get the first load that was taken from the shore on New Year's morning. "When the first load was taken home a small quantity was laid down at each door of the farm steading and the remainder was cast into the fields—a portion to each field." It was supposed to bring luck.[4]

Domestic religion centres largely round the great events of birth, marriage, and death. But it is often difficult to draw a clear line of demarcation between what was originally an offering to the nature spirit to secure his favour and what was a rite designed to ward off the baneful influences of fairy, witch, and other hostile demon. The same rite might be intended to accomplish both objects, and may therefore be reckoned either as a part of family religion, or as a magical safeguard against those in league with Satan.

[1] Hutcheson, Days of Yore, 27. [2] Sp. Misc., I, 159.
[3] Cramond, Reminiscences of Old Town of Cullen, 45; Hutcheson, Days of Yore, 27.
[4] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, II (1884), 331.

1. Birth.

One of the great moments of peril in human life was at birth. There was danger both to mother and child. To protect them, they were "sained," i.e. blessed, and thus preserved from evil. A fir candle was lighted and carried three times round the bed, if it was in a position to allow this to be done, but if it was, as usually, a box bed, the torch was whirled three times round the heads of mother and babe. A Bible, bread, and cheese were placed under the pillow and the prayer uttered, "May the Almichty debar a' ill fae this 'umman, an' be aboot 'ir and bless 'ir and 'ir bairn."[1]

There is a slight Christian colouring in this primitive ceremonial. But the torch was the same as was carried round the fields to ward off all ill from the crops and to secure a prosperous harvest. A slightly different mode of prophylaxis was indicated by John Ramsay of Ochtertyre, who, writing in the eighteenth century, said: "On the North-East coast it is the first business of the midwife to set a lighted candle at each corner of the bed, whilst in other countries she takes a light or a fiery peat and draws a circle thrice round the lying-in woman, moving it deiseil, i.e. according to the course of the sun."[2] Among the fishing population, a fir candle or a basket containing bread and cheese was placed on the bed to keep the fairies at a distance.[3] The bread and cheese seem the usual offering to appease the fairies and recur again and again in connection with domestic rites of propitiation or aversion. The fire in the form of a fir torch was potent against the unseen hosts of evil. Another form in which it was employed for the same purpose was the live coal which was thrown into the water in which the new-born infant was bathed.[4] At Pennan, in Aberdeenshire, if a cradle was borrowed, a live peat was pitched into it at the door of the borrower.[5] In both cases the red-hot peat ensured the expulsion of all malignant influences and the consequent safety of the child.

Iron was also regarded as a sure preservative. Rev. John Mill of Dunrossness tells in his diary of what happened when his second child was born in 1758. "The ignorant creature (native midwife), having taken a large table knife and made crosses over

[1] Gregor, Echo, 87.
[2] Ramsay, Scotland and Scotsmen, II, 423.
[3] Gregor, Echo, 87.
[4] *Ibid.*, 90.
[5] Gregor, Folk-Lore, II (1891), 76.

the bed after the child-birth, according to her superstitious custom—the remains of Black Popery—my wife bid her begone with her devilry." [1] There is here a mingling of the old and new charms. It was charged against Katherine Fergus that she came to Harry Gordon of Dilsprois' wife in her child-bed: "who being troubled took a drawn sword and stuck it fast in the wall fornent her, during all the time of her travail; which sword all the time trembled and shook like an aspen or willow." [2]

In Aberdeenshire, Mrs. Beaton tells of how "a witch-pin" was an essential to the security of the child, and if it was found at the baptism in the home that this brooch was wanting in its "barries," one of the older matrons would either present or lend one to the child. A witch-pin was rather like a brooch in shape and was essential to warding off the witches.[3]

Another potent prophylactic was bread and cheese. On the birth of the child there was a festal celebration called the "merry meht." One of the preparations that had been made in view of the anticipated event was the provision of the crying kebback or cheese. In some districts a bannock made of oatmeal, milk, and sugar, and baked in the frying pan, called the crying bannock, was served up. Each of the guests carried off a piece of the cheese to be distributed among friends. Anyone, rich or poor, who called at the house after the birth had to partake of the crying kebback. They got "a kneeblick o' cheese and breed" and a drink of home-brewed ale or whisky.[4] When baptism took place at church, the nurse or one of the party carried bread and cheese and these were given to the first person met. If this was omitted, misfortune would follow.[5] This practice was also observed in the Isle of Man, where it saved the child from the power of witches or fairies,[6] and also in Durham, where the nurse bestowed the bread and cheese on the first person she met of the opposite sex to that of the child.[7]

Children born with a caul or "silly hoo" (holy or fortunate hood) were accounted lucky. It ensured success in life. The smallest part of it was a safeguard against drowning, and there-

[1] Mill, Diary, 23. [2] Robertson, Book of Bon-Accord, 365.
[3] Beaton, At Back of Bennachie, 34 *f.*
[4] Gregor, Echo, 85; Beaton, *op. cit.*, 33.
[5] Smith, Folk-Lore Antiq. of Auchindoir.
[6] Choice Notes, 148. [7] Henderson, Folk-Lore, 12.

fore much sought after by sailors. In Germany and Iceland the membrane was carefully preserved. Amongst the Icelanders it was believed that part of the child's soul dwelt in it.

There was always a fear that a new-born child was in the fairy spells till it sneezed. Then all danger was past. A child sneezed and the nurse exclaimed, "God sain the bairn, it's no a warlock!"[1] This belief is held in Europe, Asia, Africa.

A strange belief associated with birth is mentioned by Dr. Gregor[2] and exemplified in cases which came before the Church Courts. It was believed that if a male cat chanced to jump over food and emitted semen, the one who partook of the food conceived cats. My informant has heard people in Glenlivet say they did not like a male cat to jump across the table when food was upon it. This belief crops up in various cases which came before the Presbyteries. On 5th March, 1654, Jean Simpson of Rothiemay confessed at a meeting of the Session that she and her mother went to Agnes Bain for herb medicine to stay the cats that were in her belly. Her case was referred to the Presbytery,[3] before whom she appeared on the 22nd of the same month at Botarie. She admitted she said she had "cats in her bellie." In fact she so firmly believed it that she went to the minister of Rothiemay and urged him to give her a recommendation to the physicians in Aberdeen. This he refused to do. Her mother in giving evidence said she thought it had indeed been cats and that her daughter had not been with child. But when Jean went to the minister of King-Edward "to get a potion from him to kill the cats," he refused, saying it was a child and not cats.[4] It is evident this belief about cats prevailed amongst the underworld. It would be fostered by the witches who professed to sell curative potions. At Elgin in 1571 a trial occurred which reveals the same conception. Janet Kar was convicted of wronging Megot Nachty in saying "maky maie yow ceist ane barrall of makis furth of the weym yow castis bot kitlyngis (kittens) and nocht childerying."[5] Almost a century later, the same belief was paraded by a witch. In 1661 delation was given in by Archibald Forsyth in Elgin against Margaret

[1] Choice Notes, 257. [2] Notes, 124.
[3] Rothiemay Records, I, 95.
[4] Presbytery Book of Strathbogie, 247 ff.
[5] Cramond, Records of Elgin, I. 127.

Murray, witch in Elgin, accusing her of bewitching his wife who was in great pain till Margaret came to her. The witch said in the presence of many honest women that it was cats that were in her womb. So that she was never well thereafter, but died in the birth of the child.[1] The witch in this case and Jean Simpson in Rothiemay, each for her own ends, fostered this belief, a belief that belongs to a low stage of development. It traces back to the savage state when man was ignorant of the cause of fertilisation. Amongst various primitive peoples, there are stories of conception caused as here by semen partaken through the mouth. An Irish manuscript of the fifteenth century tells how Cred, the daughter of a king of Leinster, gathered and ate cress on which the sperma genitale of a robber had fallen, with the result that there was born the ever-living Boethin.[2] It is remarkable to find this belief about male cats lingering in the North almost to our own day.

It was a firm conviction of many that each woman was destined to have a certain number of children. Each must have her "nummer." This belief was widely prevalent among the sea-faring population,[3] but it was not confined to them. A few years ago an old creature called upon her minister to crave his sympathy, for the unfilial remark of a daughter, who said to her unmarried mother, "Mither, ye hid nae bizness ha'ein' hiz." The reply of the ancient which she repeated to her pastor was, "Hoo cud a hae helpit it, if God hid na wulled it?" This may be either ultra Calvinism or what is more probable, it may refer to every female having her "nummer."

Following birth usually comes baptism. Baptism was, and is, surrounded by beliefs that antedate Christianity.

Amongst the peasantry it was believed, and the belief is still held by some, that a child dying unbaptised would haunt the parents. The fear that in the silent night they would hear their dead child crying. "Nameless me! Nameless me!" was the reason why, till quite recently, many, out of touch with the Church and out of sympathy with its teaching, sought baptism for their offspring. At an earlier period, Pennant in his Tour, writing of Lower Banffshire, said: "The little spectres, called

[1] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 300.
[2] Hartland, Primitive Paternity, I, 12.
[3] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal (1883), I, 120.

Tarans, or the souls of unbaptised infants, were often seen flitting among the woods and secret places, bewailing in soft voices their hard fate." [1] This belief was also to be found in the Borders. It appears in the story of Short Hoggers of Whittinghame. A mother murdered her child that had not received its Christian name. On dark nights the ghost of the child was seen by the villagers, and heard bewailing its unhappy lot, because it had no name, and without a name it could get no proper footing in the other world. No one dared speak to the unhappy spirit in case they died immediately after, but one dark night a man going home intoxicated addressed it, " How's a wi' ye, this morning, Short Hoggers ? " when the child at once ran away, joyfully exclaiming :—

> Oh ! weel's me noo, I've gotten a name :
> They ca' me Short-Hoggers o' Whittinghame.[2]

The craving for baptism on the part of the non-Christian population springs from beliefs that were current before the coming of Christianity. Then certain ceremonies were performed by which the child, if it was to be reared, was admitted a member of the community, and thus protected from evil spirits that might injure. The rites included the employment of water, the bestowal of a name, and safeguarding from evil demons or witches. In the Christian Era, in Norway and Iceland, there was a double baptism, the one pagan and civil, the other religious and Christian. The old and the new existed side by side.[3] When the belief in the nameless child haunting the glens in the quiet evenings faded, the desire for baptism died out amongst a particular class.

An ecclesiastical offence associated with baptism in church has also a pre-Christian origin. At Old Machar, in 1687, two men, having confessed to struggling for precedence at the baptism of their children in face of the congregation and thus causing a great scandal, had to appear before the pulpit next Lord's Day, and make satisfaction.[4] It seems as if the belief prevailed that the

[1] Pennant, Tour, 69 ; cf. Shaw, 307.

[2] Chambers, Popular Rhymes, 115.

[3] Cf. Prof. F. M. Lindsay in Encycl. Britannica (9th ed.), Baptism, III, 349 ; Hastings, Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, II, 374 ; Warde Fowler, Religious Experience, 28, 42.

[4] Munro, Records of Old Aberdeen, II, 86.

first baptised carried off the blessing of the water. It is the same idea as is found in connection with some wells.[1]

Another question of precedence arose at baptism, but the motive was different. If a boy and girl were baptised at the same time, the problem was as to which should be christened first. Different views obtained in different quarters, but the view, which found most general acceptance, and was probably the original, was that the boy should come first. One can hardly doubt that this was the earlier standpoint. On the one hand, it was held that if a girl were baptised first, when she came to womanhood she would have a beard and exhibit a masculine character, the boy, when he grew up, proving beardless. On the other hand, some would give the female child precedence in case the boy left his beard in the water and the girl received it. In my own experience, in a parish in Central Banffshire, the boy had to be baptised first, while in a parish not far distant the usage was reversed.[2] In the South-West of Scotland, in Durham, and in Orkney, the boy took precedence.[3]

Kindred to baptism as an initiatory rite, are various other ceremonies of initiation. When a new boat was brought home to a fishing village, a certain ritual was followed. There was the dedication of the boat and the offering to the Spirit of the Ocean of bread and cheese. At Portessie the fisher folks, having gathered beside the boat, one of them "flang bere in ower the boat, sang oot the boat's name, and three cheers wiz gi'en."[4] The bere was a sacrificial offering just as were the bread and cheese tied to the beam of the plough in the agricultural rite. This ceremony was followed by the "boat feast," attended by all the men, if of a small village. Each set of men sat together.

Another initiatory rite was connected with the first shoeing of a young horse. There was always a merry-making. The owner went to the smithy, his pocket lined with a bottle of whisky. In Aberdour, an old farmer would have his colt shod at home, where the feast was held, consisting of the best produce of the farm and a bottle of whisky.[5] In the form here described, the

[1] See p. 48. [2] Gregor, Notes, 13; Milne, Myths, 8.
[3] Napier, Folk-Lore, 32; Henderson, Folk-Lore, 16; County Folk-Lore, III, 163 (O. and S.).
[4] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, IV, 11. [5] *Ibid.*, II, 109.

celebration cannot be old, but originally it may have been associated with the first harnessing or "yoking" of the horse.

The ceremony which connects with the "funin' pint" bears the marks of antiquity. When laying the foundation of a house, the workmen had to be treated to bread and cheese and whisky or ale. Unless this was done, health and happiness would not rest on the house. It is told that when a manse was being built on the banks of the Spey, a minister would not give "the funin' pint." Out of revenge the masons built into the wall a piece of a tombstone. The consequence was the manse proved unhealthy and the minister short-lived.[1] The "funin' pint" was probably only the remains of an earlier and more primitive rite, in which human or animal sacrifice was involved. Human sacrifice used to be offered at the foundation of a new building. A new house was dangerous. The local spirit had to be propitiated. In the Pictish village at the Bay of Skaill, Sandwick, Orkney, Professor Childe discovered the remains of an adult beneath the kitchen refuse and stamped earth floor of a hut. Here was a foundation sacrifice.[2] In historic times it had ceased to be offered; the "funin' pint" is all that survived.

2. Marriage.

Troth was plighted, sometimes by the exchange of silver, sometimes by a divided sixpence :—

> I sit at my creepie and spin at my wheel,
> And think on the laddie that lo'ed me sae weel,
> He had but a'e sixpence, he brak it in twa,
> And he gied me the half o't when he gaed awa'.

The time chosen for the marriage was important. May was a month to be avoided, and to this day fewer marriages are then celebrated than in any other month of the year. This is not peculiar to the North-East, where the fear of ill-luck following a marriage in that month is diminishing. But it is a belief of old standing. In Rome it was a proverbial saying that only ill-omened women marry in May.

> Mense malas maio nubere vulgus ait.[3]

[1] Gregor, Echo, 15; Notes on Folk-Lore, 50 f.
[2] Prof. Childe, *Glasgow Herald*, 28th August, 1928.
[3] Ovid, Fasti, V, 487.

This line was affixed to the gates of Holyrood Palace on the morning of the 16th May, the day after the marriage of Mary Queen of Scots and Bothwell.

The period of an increasing moon was chosen in Banffshire and Orkney.[1] The people would have regarded it as a tempting of fate if they had embarked on matrimony at a time when the moon was on the wane. Every great enterprise was undertaken when that orb was growing.

The date of marriage being fixed, it was, and still is, necessary to put in the banns for proclamation. The Saturday evening preceding the Sunday of intimation was called "the beuckin' nicht." The bridegroom, if at all possible, presented himself (and probably does so still) at the home of the bride along with a few friends. Accompanied by the bride's father or other relative, the young man goes to the session clerk—and the custom still holds in many places—to give in the name, for proclamation or, as it was called, "to lay down the pawns." On the night before the wedding there still takes place the feet-washing. A few of the bridegroom's intimate friends assemble at his parents' home. He is stripped of shoes and stockings, his feet and legs are plunged in water and smeared with soot or shoe-blacking. This seems the survival of an ancient custom. Nowadays it is but a meaningless frolic. But in its beginnings, the soot with which the limbs were smeared was believed to possess magical virtue as connected with the hearth and fire, and may have been held to "neutralise the mutual dangers of contact." In this connection Dr. George Henderson compares its use at another crisis in human life. "Geigean, Righ Gigean, was the man who presided over the death revels. These were held in winter. The man elected by lot presided over the revels from midnight to cock-crow. A tub of cold water was passed over his head . . . after which his face and neck were smeared with soot." [2]

The "waddin' sark" was the gift of the bride to the bridegroom. He on his part provided her with the wedding dress. A peasant once remarked to a friend that "he never really intended to take Maggie (his wife), but the cutty saw this, flew to his neck and measured him for the sark, and so he was obliged to have her." [3] From this one may infer that the gift of the

[1] S.A., XII, 457; Barry, Orkney Islands, 333.
[2] Henderson, Survivals, 246. [3] Guthrie, Old Scottish Customs, 161.

shirt was more than an evidence of the young woman's skill in needlework. Its acceptance was a pledge of marriage. The custom was observed in Central Banffshire till quite recently. A few years ago a marriage was broken off after the banns were proclaimed. The breach arose owing to a difference of opinion as to this ancient practice. The old and the new were in conflict. Probably here too there are elements of an ancient rite. For we are told of the bridegroom in India: "he clothes the bride with an upper and better garment, and the skirts of her mantle and his are tied together." [1]

The minister who conducted the marriage service was usually that of the bride. But there was one exception to this rule. If he were newly ordained to the charge, then amongst those who adhered to the old beliefs, only misfortune would follow if he were to officiate. I have known a bride and bridegroom, members of a small Presbyterian body, and devotedly loyal to their Communion, in such circumstances seek the services of the parish minister. The earlier belief outweighed all newly-formed loyalties to Church. It is the ban on everything new. S. Baring-Gould points out a Yorkshire superstition in regard to baptism. "It is said in that county that the first child baptised in a new font is sure to die." [2]

The wedding in the olden time was attended by the whole community. Each guest brought a gift of food and also contributed to the payment of the piper. Hence the names "penny wedding," "silver brydal." Along with the feasting and dancing there was much drunkenness. For two centuries the Church struggled to suppress the penny brydal, as being the occasion of all uncleanness. More than one murder occurred in the North-East at such a marriage, which continued for two or three days. The following extract shows the fears of the Kirk Session of Elgin, and in rural districts conditions were very much worse. At Elgin, on 24th June, 1601, "Alexander Thome and Agnes Pyerie find caution that thai sall not use no balling, pyping, nor dancing, nor any excess nor ryot nor yet cum forth to the calsay under the pains of £10, and the parties to be married the morn." [3] The interesting fact about the penny brydal is that it was really

[1] Kelly, Curiosities, 292. [2] Henderson, Folk-Lore, 121.
[3] Cramond, Records of Kirk Session of Elgin, 81.

kept by the whole community, sometimes by the population of a fishing village, sometimes by the inhabitants of a rural district. Marriage was a ceremonial with which all were concerned: the whole tribe was involved.

On leaving the church where the marriage service took place, or on leaving the old home, an old shoe was thrown after the bride. This was a symbol of the surrender by the parent of his legal right over the bride.[1]

In the parties of the bride and bridegroom as they went to church, was one man carrying a bottle and glass and another carrying bread and cheese. The first person met was treated.[2] The bread and cheese served here the same purpose as when an infant was carried to church to be baptised.[3]

A constant firing of guns and pistols took place. Every means was adopted to drive away hostile spirits. At times the discharge of firearms was continued during the service in the church. At Banchory-Devenick, in 1732, two men were found guilty by the Session of firing pistols in time of worship at a marriage in church. In 1839 the same Session forbade all shooting at marriages.[4] But the custom continued in many parts of the country long after the reason for its observance was forgotten.

If more than one couple were married in church at the same time, there were often unseemly scenes before the close of the marriage service. Some of the parties would be making for the door before the benediction was pronounced, the reason being that, in the popular belief, the first out of church carried off the blessing. At Elgin, on 13th July, 1632, William Adam is fined by the Session for his "uncomely behaviour in the kirk after a marriage in pressing to be the first to be at the door."[5] This was so frequent an offence there, that in 1638, on the occasion of three marriages, the contracting parties were "acted not to make tumult nor strive for place at going out at the Kirk doors under pain of 40s., each man for himself."[6] This may have had the effect of securing a reverent behaviour on the particular occasion, but the disturbances continued, for on Friday, 4th January,

[1] Cf. Ruth iv. 7, 8, and for Arabian parallels, G. A. Smith, Encyc. Bibl., III, 5196, § 83 (*e*).

[2] Cf. Gregor, Notes, 91.

[3] Henderson, Banchory-Devenick, 246 f.

[4] *Ibid.*, 241.

[5] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 223.

[6] *Ibid.*, 233.

1650, at Elgin, Mr. Thomas Law complained that on the previous night Isobel Chalmer, while at public prayer in the church at the time of a marriage "in the midst of the last prayer most contemptuously did rise and raise up with her a great number of men and women in tumultuous way, so that the minister was forced to intermit the prayer." [1] A fuller account is given of the scene in Rathven Church, a hundred years later, when a similar disturbance took place. "At Rathven Church, 1750, October 14. Two couples, having been married on the Thanksgiving Day, there happened a very disorderly throng in outgoing of the people by their not waiting to hear the last prayer or blessing, but running out as soon as prayer began, Angus Cormach, taking out his sister, one of the brides, out of her seat, and John Runcie calling on the brides to go out of doors hand in hand." [2] Probably Runcie wished both brides to share the good fortune that accrued to the first outside the church. This custom does not seem to bear the mark of antiquity. It would be natural to expect a belief to prevail that the first couple to be married carried off the blessing, just as the first child at baptism.[3] There seems some suggestion of this belief in a case that came before the Session of Inveravon. "It was regretted by the minister that John Mitchell and George Walker, both being about to marry on Tuesday last, did strive who might be first in at the Kirk door, and for this cause, it was ordained by the Session that the days of the marriage in time coming, the Kirk door should be patent and whosoever, if there were more parties to be married should first come, should enter in without impediment, and the hinderer of the other should pay ten marks." [4] The purpose, in being first into church, would be to secure precedence in marriage.

When marriages ceased to be celebrated in church, the blessing that accrued to the couple who were first out of doors was now attached to the "kirkin'." The "kirkin'" was, and still is, an important event in a rural or fishing community. When two newly married couples were "kirkit" on the same Sunday, there was, in some places, the same eager desire to be first out of the sacred edifice. A witness from Easter Ross speaks of this practice continuing to the present day. Amongst the natives,

[1] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 269.
[2] Cramond, Rathven, 69.
[3] See p. 115.
[4] Dunnett, Invera'an, 13, 737.

when they are kirked, if there has been more than one marriage, they go early to church and secure a seat near the door. They then rush home, sometimes the husband before the bride, the belief being that " the marriage party which first arrives at home from the kirking are sure to be prosperous and happy in after-life, whereas those left behind run the risk of becoming the victims of misfortune and adversity." [1] Here is an old belief adapted to changed circumstances.

The dancing began with the shaimit reel.[2] This dance was confined to the bride, the bride's maidens, the bridegroom and the best young men. The bride had the privilege of choosing the music for the dance, called the " shaim spring." At this point, the men each put a piece of silver into the hand of the musician.

Round the installation of the bride in her new home centred many ceremonies with a " lang pedigree." As she approached the threshold, she was met by her mother and one or two of her relatives, carrying a napkin with pieces of shortbread or oatmeal cake, the infar cake, which was thrown over her head. It was a survival of the old Roman confarreatio, or marriage by offering of bread. If the bread was not broken over the bride's head, she would come to poverty. This cake was gathered and distributed amongst the unmarried women. They took it home and put it under their pillow " to dream on it." It was the forerunner of the bride's cake or wedding cake.[3] In Shetland the cake was baked with seeds and sugar, and called " the dreaming bread," from the purpose to which it was devoted.[4]

Crossing the threshold of the new home involved peril from unseen influences. The door of a home was always a danger-point. To ensure the safety of the bride, she was carried over the threshold.[5] A Deeside laird bringing home his bride recently observed this ancient custom. Another preservative was a live peat on the doorstep. After a kirking in Cromar about fifty years ago, the bride came home to find a burning peat over which she had to pass before she could enter, and as if this were not

[1] Alex. MacGregor, Highland Superstitions, 49.
[2] Gregor, Notes, 95; Grant Stewart, Popular Superstitions, 274.
[3] Gregor, Notes, 99; Milne, Myths, 8.
[4] County Folk-Lore, III (O. and S.), 209 f.
[5] Napier, Folk-Lore, 51; Scott, Demonology, 83.

a sufficient prophylactic, she found, when she got into the house, a hen which had been thrown in.[1] There are here two modifications of venerable customs. Originally the live peat would have been deposited after the marriage, not after the kirking. Then the scape sacrifice, the bearer of all ill, would have been a cock, not a hen.

Having entered her new home, the bride was led to the hearth and the tongs put into her hands. With it she stirred the fire, and again built it up. The crook or lum click was then swung three times round her head, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and with the prayer, " May the Almichty mack this umman a gweed wife ! " [2] Omitting the later Christian formula, these rites are not unlike the Slav custom. When a Slavonian bride enters her new home, she is led thrice round the hearth. Then she must stir the fire with the poker, saying, " As many sparks spring up, so many cattle, so many male children shall enliven the new home." [3] Sir James Frazer infers from this that the practice of leading a bride formally round the hearth was designed to make her fruitful, through the fertilising virtue of the fire. This would be in keeping with the purpose of the other fire ceremonials. It is evidently an old and widespread custom. It obtained in Germany.[4]

Another method of " saining " the bride was observed in Buckie. A torch made of a fir stick, from which a knot had been ejected, leaving a hole, was lit by the mother-in-law of the bride. She whirled the lighted torch round the head of the young wife, saying, " I'm sayin' (saining) ye in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." This was practised about a century ago. In rural districts, after the fire purification, the bride was led to the meal girnal where she plunged her hand into it as far down as she could.[5]

The beddan was the closing event. When the bride was missing, there was a rush to the bridal chamber on the part of her friends. After she was in bed, a bottle of whisky and bread and cheese were put into her hands. She gave each a dram and a " piece." One of her stockings she threw over her left shoulder.

[1] S.N. and Q., 1st series, X, 166 f.
[2] Gregor, Notes, 92 , S.N. and Q., 3rd series, 56.
[3] Frazer, The Magic Art, II, 230 f.
[4] Kelly, Curiosities, 293 f.
[5] Gregor, Buchan Field Club, III, 140.

There was a great contest to secure it. The final possessor would be first married.[1]

3. Death.

Various omens of impending death were vouchsafed. The wraith or "waff" was an apparition exactly like the living person. Its appearance was commonly thought to forbode death. The ancient Persians and Jews believed every one had a guardian angel. Though generally invisible this spirit might separate itself from the person and become visible for a time. There is an example in the Acts of the Apostles. When St. Peter, supposed to be in prison, knocked at the door of the gate of the house, the maiden who opened the door, recognising Peter's voice, went and told the disciples he was at the door. Then they said, "It is his angel" (or wraith). Another omen was the sound of the sex-call of the death-watch beetle. It is produced by knocking the body against the wood and is really a monitor of love and not of death. There was the "deed drap" which resembled a continued slow dropping of water, but it was leaden and hollow. Another harbinger of death was the dead can'le, giving forth a pale bluish light quite unlike that given out by an ordinary candle. It was seen moving about the house in which the death was to occur, and along the road by which the corpse would be carried to the churchyard.[2] In the popular belief, the premonitions of death were many. If a murder or any terrible crime was to be committed, an eerie sound would be heard beforehand. An aged couple was murdered at the Cottartown of Auchanacie, near Keith, on the 11th January, 1797. Shortly before the deed was committed a sound was heard passing along the road that led to their cottage. So loud and extraordinary was this noise that people left their houses to see what was happening. But they saw nothing, even though it was bright moonlight. All believed something terrible was about to occur. Some proposed to follow the sound, a man named Newlands volunteering to lead. But none would follow. About the time this discussion was going on, a blaze of fire rose on the hill of Auchanacie. The cottage of the aged couple had been fired, and they themselves burned. It was believed to be the work of two tramps, who had been seen

[1] Gregor, Notes, 96. [2] Gregor, Echo, 133.

in the neighbourhood on the day of the murder. Now all knew what the mysterious sound portended.[1]

On the occurrence of death, it was the custom in the North as elsewhere for a messenger to leave the house, and go out and " tell the bees ! " There was a kinship with the bees. If there was a mirror in the room, it was covered with a towel. All the hens and cats were shut up from the time the death occurred till the interment. If either of them leaped over the corpse, the person who first met them after doing so would become blind.[2] In the early years of the nineteenth century, John Duncan in Old Cullen took his turn of sitting up all night with a dying man. The man died during the night, and John at once shut up the cat to prevent misfortune.[3]

On the breast was placed a saucer or plate containing salt, the belief being that the salt kept the devil and all evil spirits from disturbing the body. They could not come near Christ's savour of the earth. But there may have been an older belief behind this custom. There were persons calling themselves sin-eaters who, on the occasion of a death, were summoned to come and eat the sins of the deceased. They placed a plate of salt and a plate of bread on the corpse and repeated some incantations. Then they ate the contents of the plate and so relieved the dead person of such sins as would have kept his spirit still hovering around.[4]

A coin was placed in the coffin beside the corpse. The Greeks put an obolus into the mouth of the dead wherewith the ghost might pay its fare to the Stygian ferryman. In some parts of Germany this custom was observed and a coin inserted in the mouth of the corpse to pay its passage.[5] In the North of Scotland a man still alive, a regular churchgoer, and a Justice of the Peace, put half-a-crown into the coffin beside his dead father. He was keeping up the traditions of the fathers. He is like Jock Forsyth at the Craiguck well. In him, the old and the new meet, and I am inclined to think he would say, the old is better.

Before the last rites were performed, it was the custom, and the practice is still followed in rural districts, for every visitor

[1] Gregor, Notes, 205 f. [2] *Ibid.*, 207.
[3] Cramond, Reminiscences of Old Town of Cullen, 41.
[4] Napier, Folk-Lore, 60 f.
[5] Kelly, Curiosities, 120 ; Thorpe, Northern Mythology, I, 291.

to lay the hand on the head or breast of the corpse. This was more than a " token of respect." It showed there was no quarrel with the dead. Probably it connects with the ordeal of blood.

The great event connected with death was the lykewake, the watching beside the corpse. The Christian idea of a night vigil, during which the Scriptures were read, prayers offered and hymns sung, was observed among some portions of the community, but that is not the lykewake that appears in the Church records : and it was no Christian motive that called it into being. Abundant supplies of bread and cheese, also of tobacco and whisky were provided. From the provision of the tobacco, the lyke was sometimes spoken of as the " tobacco nicht," whilst the indulgence in whisky was responsible for the disorders that so frequently arose. John Ramsay gives a picture of the " waukan " which, judging by the ecclesiastical records, was only too true. " Nothing went on in the house of mourning but dancing and other amusements. Even the ties of nature and affinity seem to have been suspended, for a widow who had just lost her husband, her and her infant's only support, was constrained by the fashion to suppress her sorrow, and to join in the expressions of joy and merriment. The nearest relation of the deceased, together with the stranger of most distinction, commonly began the dance . . . , there are strong traces of this custom not only among Eastern Highlanders but even among the bordering Lowlanders not long ago." [1]

Various aspects of this celebration are brought to light in the Church records. Guising took place at the lyke. At Aberdeen on 9th February, 1575-76, Mage Morrison is decerned to pay 6s. 8d. to the magistrate for " abusing of hirselff in claything of hir with mennes clayes at the like of George Elmislyes wife." [2] The object was to prevent the parties watching being recognised by the spirits if they returned. Perhaps their ugly faces also would scare away the spirits. The records of the burgh of the 3rd January, 1638, refer to the provision for the festivities and " the great disorders and confusion " on what should have been a solemn occasion.[3] In the city one would not expect to find the awful scenes of drinking and debauchery that occurred in

[1] Scotland and Scotsmen, 428 f. ; cf. Pennant, Tour (1769), 49.
[2] Stuart, Selections, 21.
[3] Stuart, Records of Aberdeen, I, 123 (Edin.).

some of the country districts. In 1621, at Elgin, it was ordained by the Session that no one be found at the departure of any person "singing bawdrie songs nor na lewd fassones." [1] Surely a strange way of doing reverence to the dead! There appears a reference from the Presbytery of Strathbogie to the Synod of Elgin anent censuring of guisers, as also "the censuring and restraining that profaneness, dancing and unseemly carriage ordinarily found at lykewakes." [2] This riotous celebration beside the corpse is here spoken of as the "ordinary" or usual occurrence. It seems to have been so, for the records of the same Synod frequently refer to abuses at lykewakes. In 1675 notice is taken of "lascivious exercises, sports, lyk songs, fiddling, dancing and gaming." [3] Nothing reveals so clearly the absence of any real religious feeling as this bacchanalian revelry associated with the solemnity of death. In 1675, at the Synod of Moray, the Lord Bishop and brethren were informed and "deeply weighted with the superstitious and heathenish customs practised at lykewakes" at many places within the diocese. The dancing, in which the nearest relatives had to take part, the drinking to excess which universally prevailed, the singing of "bawdrie songs," the lascivious exercises, the guising, the gaming, all point to a terrible orgy of sensual savage indulgence when all sense of decency and morality was utterly lost. This pagan celebration never took its rise in a Christian rite. It sprang from a heathen past, when the noise and revelry were invoked to ward off evil spirits and thus maintain the morale of the living. That this was the purpose is shown by a belief which survived, when the worst features of the lyke had passed. Of the watchers, Dr. Gregor writes: "One of them at least had to be awake, lest the evil spirits might come and put a mark upon the body." [4] It was altogether a survival of "heathenism," as the Church Courts described it. With a veneer of Christianity, the natives in the great crises of life and death reverted to the practices of their heathen ancestors. At the waukan, they were like the African savage beating the tom-tom to keep all malignant demons at bay.

It is strange how, amongst many primitive peoples, the spirits

[1] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 165.
[2] Cramond, Extracts from Records of Synod of Moray, 133.
[3] *Ibid.*, 160 f. [4] Gregor, Echo, 140 f.; cf. Notes, 209.

of the dead have been conceived as hostile and not friendly. Amongst the Babylonians, Assyrians, Greeks, and Romans they were regarded as more likely to do evil than good to the living.[1] Various steps were therefore taken to protect the relatives and friends. Guising had this object in view. If the spirit of the departed returned, he would not be able to recognise his kindred.

Again, the practice at a funeral of turning upside down all the chairs in the room, from which the corpse had been taken, or those outside on which the coffin rested, before the bearers took their place, was due to the same desire, namely, to deceive the departed in case he should return. With the chairs overturned —sometimes they were thrown away and never used again—he would not recognise the place. With the same object in view, a circuit was made sunways by the mourners round some spot near the grave. Shaw, writing of Speymouth, says: "At the churchyard style, there stood a small house commonly called 'the house of the Holy Ghost,' around which, sunways, the people made a tour with the corpse at burials, and could not be restrained from this superstition till the walls were quite razed of late."[2] Till about a century later, the same practice continued to be followed. In what is now the parish of Cairney, the coffin was carried to Carol's Cairn, about a quarter of a mile east of the old churchyard of Ruthven, and the funeral procession marched round the cairn, following the direction of the sun, and then on to the churchyard.[3] This may have been intended to confuse the corpse, and so prevent its retracing its steps. Lane mentions a practice among the modern Egyptians of turning the corpse round and round to make it giddy, so that it might not know where it was going. For the same end, apparently, the Santals carry the body three times round the pyre.[4] The sunways procession itself is a mark of great antiquity.

In some parts of Aberdeenshire it was believed the ghost of the last person buried kept the gate of the churchyard, till relieved by the spirit of the next victim of death. His task was to guard lest any suicide or unbaptised child should be buried in the consecrated ground. The result was that, when two

[1] Westermarck, *op. cit.*, II, 531 ff.
[2] History of the Province, III, 385.
[3] Pirie, Cairney, 140.
[4] Encyc. Brit., (9th ed.), IX, 8256.

funerals approached the churchyard at the same time, there was an eager rush to be the first to enter. On occasion, the dead were thrown down till the living decided with their fists whose ghost would have to act as guardian of the gate.[1] This belief was not confined to the North-East. It led to many unseemly scenes in the Highlands and other parts.[2]

There is some evidence that there was once practised the custom of accelerating the end of the diseased and aged. At Alves on 15th March, 1663, "the minister represented to the Eldership that he had heard of a verie sinful miscarriage in some people in Easter Alves, viz. the ringing of a Millen Bridle (as they call it), upon ane aged and diseased poor woman, called Margaret Anderson, thereby to hasten her death as they conceived. Their names are Andrew Angus and Agnes Rob." A week later "compeared Andrew Angus and confessed he rang the bridle; he being interrogated what were the words he spake at the ringing of it, answered that he said, 'Cran's flesh or Wran's flesh come out thy way.'" Agnes Rob confessed she "went out for and sought for and brought to the house the bridle at the diseased woman her own desire."[3] This is not here associated with witchcraft, though the phrase employed looks like a magic formula. It appears to be a method of hastening the end, available to any who sought to employ the means. These were the millen bridle, which seems to have been in the possession and charge of some member of the community, and the repetition of a certain incantation. This happened in Morayshire in 1663. Another method of achieving the same object is referred to by Aubrey. He has preserved "a countrie storie" of the "holy mawle w^{ch} (they fancy) hung behind the church dore w^{ch} when the father was seaventie the sonne might fetch, to knock his father in the head as effoete and of no more use."[4] The custom of hastening death prevailed among many nations of old; it was resorted to by many European peoples, including those of Teutonic extraction. The sick and aged were killed among some native tribes of Paraquay and Brazil and amongst several branches of the Aryan family. Among the Chukchees of North-Eastern Asia, "when a man's strength fails, and he is tired of life, he requests his son or other near relation to dispatch him,

[1] S.A., XXI, 144 (Monquhitter). [2] Napier, Folk-Lore, 63.
[3] Cramond, Alves, 44. [4] Aubrey, Remaines of Gentilisme, 19.

indicating the manner of death he prefers to die. So on a day appointed his friends and neighbours assemble and in their presence he is stabbed, strangled, or otherwise disposed of according to their customs."[1] There is more than one point of similarity between this practice and the incident at Easter Alves. In both, the victim is tired of life, aged, or diseased; in both, action is taken at his request by his friends. In exactly what manner Margaret Anderson met her end one cannot say without knowing something more of the instrument employed, but it was possibly by strangulation, which was one of the methods in vogue among the Chukchees. It certainly appears as if, in Morayshire, the bridle was available to any who desired to employ it. A warning was issued to the people of Alves forbidding them to resort to the use of the bridle. But the offence was not regarded as so serious as to be reported to the Presbytery. Sir James G. Frazer writes: "About the millen bridle I know nothing and do not remember any parallel. From the evidence which you quote, it appears clearly to have been a magical instrument to hasten the death of the aged, and you may be right in conjecturing that this was a relic of a general custom of getting rid of old people who had become a burden to their kinsfolk."

Belief that the spirits of the departed returned and communed with their old acquaintances was almost universal. The term familiar spirit might indicate the wraith or apparition belonging to an individual, ready to come at his behest and making its voice heard in time of impending danger. The term, however, is often employed in a different sense in the ecclesiastical records. There may be little familiarity or intimacy between the man and the spirit, designated familiar, with which he happens to have converse. The records of the Synod of Moray for 1648 show that the Presbytery of Abernethy engaged in a search for those said to converse with familiar spirits. It appears that the familiar spirit in this case assumed the form of a little boy. "Two men confessed they had seen, about sixteen years ago, a little boy to appear unto them upon the way, and that suddenly it vanished and that they never did see the same before nor after."[2] This does not seem a very familiar spirit. The term is more applicable

[1] Cf. Frazer, The Dying God, 13; cf. 12, 14; and Westermarck, *op. cit.*, I, 387.

[2] Cramond, Records of Synod of Moray, 94.

to one that was seen at Dyce. In 1601 a parishioner in Dyce was cited to appear before the Presbytery of Aberdeen because he had "familiaritie of spirits." He related his experience. Twenty-seven years before "ther came to his dur a spirit and callit upon him, 'Wattie, Wattie!' and this was in the barley seid tyme." It came back twice a year, when he heard a voice but saw no man. On one occasion at Michaelmas, 1600, when he was in bed asleep, "it sat down anent the bed upoune a kist and callit upone him, saying, 'Wattie, Wattie,' and then he wakynnt and he saw the forme of it quhilk wes lyke ane litill bodie, haiffing a scheavin berd, cled in quhyt lening, lyk a sark, and it sed to the said Walter 'thou art onder wraik, gang to the weachmanis houss in Stanivoid and thair thou sall find baith siluer and gold with weschell.'" Walter went with his companions, searched with spade in the place directed, but found nothing.[1] This proved to be a lying spirit. At the Synod of Moray in 1646 Niel Grant in Duthil was alleged to have a familiar spirit, but next year the Presbytery declared that "no evident certainty is found there anent."[2] It was a difficult matter to find any certainty about. The stories were bruited abroad: when it came to getting evidence, nothing materialised. The Alford Presbytery heard reports about Patrick Ellis in Auchindoir. He was said to converse with familiar spirits. When the Presbytery dealt with him they declared him to be but a beggar, while he himself denied "being a seducer under pretence of lying in a trance or having converse with familiar spirits."[3] Such converse would be a channel of hidden knowledge, and therefore a source of gain. This explains the conduct animadverted upon at the Synod of Aberdeen on the 7th October, 1675. "This day there being divers complaints and reports given into the Synod by several brethren that some under pretence of trances or familiarities of spirits of going with these spirits commonly called the fairies, hath spoken reproachfully of some persons whereof some are dead and some living. . . ."[4] Familiarity with the spirits was a pretext for saying evil things about their neighbours. This quotation illustrates the confusion that surrounds the phrase,

[1] Stuart, Selections of Records of Presbytery of Aberdeen, 184.
[2] Cramond, Extracts of Records of Synod of Moray, 75, 82.
[3] Bell, Records of Exercise of Alford, 257 ff.
[4] Stuart, Selections of Records of Presbytery of Aberdeen, 310.

familiar spirit. The spirits here seem identified with fairies, and the state in which the communication takes place is one of trance. The parish of Dyce would appear to have been noted for its spirits. Besides Walter Ronaldsone there was Thomas Lorne in the Overtoun of Dyce, who in 1600 was charged with "hering of spreittis and wavering oftentymes fra his wyff, bairnis and familie." Often he remained away from his home for seven weeks on end. Thomas obliged himself never to do the like again, under pain of suffering death as guilty of being "a dealer with spreittis." [1] The Dyce spirits were bad spirits. They deceived Wattie, and made Thomas Lorne desert his wife and family.

It was firmly believed that the dead, in some form of apparition, might return and haunt a particular spot, especially when a murder had been committed. There were many of these places, known as "feart places," where ghosts had been seen. Rev. R. H. Calder gives one such incident in Glenlivet. "In November, 1900, a young woman engaged shortly to be married set out from Croftglass, where she had been a servant, to go by the hill road to her home at Tomnavoulin. As she and her companion crossed the site of the battle of Altachoulachan, the girl distinctly saw the headless body of a man in white roll down the brae before them. In alarm, the girl, pointing in the direction of what she saw, said to her companion several times, 'Dae ye see that? Dinna ye see't noo? Surely ye canna but see't?' At the foot of the brae the girl saw the apparition get upon its feet and run towards the burn, in which it disappeared." [2] Here was a phantom seen by only one of the two women. An apparition might give "the dead man's nip." This was the name given to those marks or spots on the skin, for which no common cause could be assigned. They were believed to be due to the spirits of the departed whose memory had been maligned. Thus when a dead person was lightly spoken of it was usual to say "he (or she) will hae a nip o' yer skin afore mornin'." A drover returning through the glen near the junction of Strachan and Glenbervie saw the apparition of Adam Strickland (who in life had sold his shadow to the devil) and received the dead man's nip.[3] The last stage of a belief is when it is knowingly employed to

[1] Stuart, Extracts from the Council Register, II, 204.
[2] Gleanings, 13. [3] Grant, Tales of the Glens, 133 ff.

impose on the credulity of others. The belief in the spirit of the departed returning and showing an interest in mundane affairs enters upon that stage in a story from the Chapel of Garioch, Aberdeenshire, about the middle of the eighteenth century. It is not easy to discover how many of the dramatis personæ really believed in the returning apparition. It is certain the leading actors were wholly sceptical. The scene was the farm of Bridgend. The farmer had died and soon his widow had followed him to the grave. There were left seven sons, the eldest of whom was George Watt. Tibbie Mortimer was general servant, and the only female in the house. Soon it was noised through the parish that the widow's ghost had been seen and heard at Bridgend, causing no little terror. The Session was approached. The minister said he had been asked by George Watt to come and "converse with the spirit, who, ever since about three or four weeks after the death of his mother in the preceding February, had frequently appeared and spoken to him and his brothers without the windows of the rooms where they lay, to their great terror and amazement." When the brothers asked the ghost as to its identity, it asserted "it was a good spirit, yea the very spirit of their departed mother," sent from heaven to make certain communications for their temporal and eternal welfare. But while the spirit "which always spoke with a shrill and heavenly voice," making the beds tremble where they lay, gave them many good counsels, the main burden of its message was that "it was the will of the great God that Geordie Watt should marry Tibbie Mortimer, because Tibbie was now in a gracious state and had been predestined to glory from all eternity." This revelation had been originally made to Geordie alone: he objected to the difference in worldly position, unless he were really satisfied it was the divine will. The seven brothers assembled at night in the same room, the ghost appeared at the window, and repeated its commission with the added threat that "unless Geordie Watt should marry Tibbie Mortimer, he and all his brothers and all things belonging to them should certainly be consumed with fire from heaven." At this stage Geordie professed himself so frightened that he appealed to the minister. The minister went to Bridgend accompanied by an elder. He prayed with the family of seven sons and then sat down to wait and watch. After some hours a voice was heard at a little

window of the bedroom in which Geordie Watt slept, announcing "in a wild and vehement tone" that it was come in the name of the Trinity to speak to them all. "Speak, George Watt, speak men and minister! Come here, and I will discourse you all," said the heroic spirit. On hearing these bold and blasphemous words, the greatest consternation fell upon all the company except the wide-awake minister who started to his feet and ran outside, making his way to the corner of the house from which the voice seemed to come. "The appearance which first presented to his view," says the Session minute, "was about the bulk of ane ordinary woman, covered with white clean linen, head and arms down to the middle of the body before and somewhat farther behind. Then willing to unravel the matter, whatever the event should be, he made such a trial of the apparition as he thought agreeable to the principles of the Christian revelation and true philosophy: and by its resistance to the end of a small rod which he had in his hand, he soon found it to be a material substance. And immediately the pretended spirit took itself to its heels, and he, running after it a few paces, caught it by the neck, and his servant coming up at the same time on the other side, caught it by the arm. The apparition was brought flat to the ground, and then, being charged as a base impostor to speak, it was silent, till he pulled the white vail from its face. Whereupon (it being a bright moonshine) he clearly saw that it was the above-named Isobel Mortimer." [1]

[1] Alexander, Northern Rural Life, 203-207.

CHAPTER IX.

DEVIL WORSHIP.

With the advent of Christianity the old nature worship assumed a sinister character. The reverence paid to the spirit of the trees, the waters, and the fire, was depressed and degraded. It came to be regarded as a worshipping of demons or devils. "The superstitious mud-earth wells of Menteith" are described by Anderson, Doctor of Physicke, Edinburgh, in 1618, as "all tapestried about with old rags as certain signes and sacraments wherewith they arle the divell with ane arls-pennie of their health: so suttle is that false knave, making them believe it is only the virtue of water and nothing els. Such people cannot say with David, 'The Lord is my helper,' but the Devill." Similarly the offering to the fire at Beltane was now regarded as an oblation to the devil. The part of the Beltane cake broken off and cast into the fire was said to be an offering to the demon or Auld Hornie, the presiding genius of the fiery region.[1] The quick ox buried at Urquhart was reckoned by the ecclesiastical authorities as a sacrifice to Satan whom his suppliant wished to propitiate.[2] At Fyvie the Presbytery of Turriff took the same view of the burial of "ane ox quick" as a real sacrifice to the devil.[3]

An enduring monument of this homage to the devil, as it appeared in the eyes of the Church, was the Goodman's Croft—a piece of land dedicated to the devil and left untilled. It got various names, the Halyman's Rig, the Goodman's Fauld, the Gi'en Rig, the Deevil's Craft, Clootie's Craft, the Black Faulie. These names almost indicate a change in the point of view. Originally land dedicated to the Great Spirit worshipped there, it came through the influence of Christianity to be regarded as

[1] S. Macdonald, Folk-Lore, XIV (1903), 381. Cf. *supra*, p. 4.
[2] See p. 32. [3] See p. 32.

land consecrated to the Evil Spirit. Be he good or bad, none dare touch it with spade or plough. This belief was not restricted to the Northern corner of Scotland. It was known in Berwickshire :—[1]

> The moss is soft on clootie's craft,
> And bonny's the sod o' the Goodman's taft
> And if ye bide there till the sun is set,
> The Goodman will catch you in his net.

In Devonshire, there were in several parishes patches of land hedged in and called Gallitrap, i.e. Gallow's trap, and considered uncanny. It was perilous to enter such a field.[2] This belief points back to an early attribution of sanctity to these spots.

In the North-East of Scotland, so numerous were the fields dedicated to the "Auld Goodman" that the Church resolved to apply to Parliament for an Act to deal with the owners of these uncultivated lands. "Anent the horrible superstition used in Garioch and divers parts of the country in not labouring a parcel of ground dedicated to the devil under the name of the Goodman's croft : the Kirk for remedy thereof has found meet that a request be made to the Parliament that an act may proceed from the Estates, ordaining all persons, possessors of the said lands, to cause labour the same betwixt and a certain day appointed thereto : otherwise in case of disobedience, the said land to fall into the king's hand to be disposed to such persons, as please his majesty, who will labour the same."[3] An Act of Parliament does not seem to have been granted, but the Church embarked on a crusade to have the "crafts" broken up and cultivated. It was two hundred years later before the last of them came under the plough. Even then action was not taken at the instigation of the Church, but was prompted by the land hunger which at the beginning of the nineteenth century was peculiarly acute, so acute as to make a man risk incurring the wrath of the ancient god or demon to whom the field was dedicated. That these crofts at one period abounded in the North there can be no doubt. That they were more common here than in other parts of Scotland also seems evident. The Garioch is

[1] Henderson, Folk-Lore, 278.
[2] S. Baring-Gould in Henderson's Folk-Lore, 278, *n.* 2.
[3] Book of the Universal Kirk, 834.

specially mentioned in the resolution of the General Assembly; and in no other district does there appear to be so much evidence of devil dedications.

Beginning with the Presbytery of Garioch, there are references to such crofts at Oyne and Inverurie. In 1650 there were three pieces of land in the parish of Oyne called the Goodman's fold, and in 1655 there was land within the parish of Inverurie "dedicated to the devill commonly called the Gudeman's fold."[1] Turriff Presbytery, too, had its black spots. At Forgue, on 3rd March, 1650, Norman Leslie and James Tuicks are delated for having given away a fold to the goodman as they call him to make their cattle "stand (i.e. thrive) and confessed they went to a fauld and promised to let it lie unlaboured as long as they possessed their tacks, and in testification thereof, they did cast some stones in over the dyke of the field." The Session judged it to be a most impious and superstitious fact, referred them to the Presbytery, and ordered the land to be laboured. At the meeting of Presbytery on 21st March of the same year, James Towx, in Forgue (one of the above), appeared and confessed that because the "gudis" were falling away they resolved to lay out a piece of land unlaboured, to essay if that might be a means of making their cattle thrive. This is a valuable witness as showing how the goodman's fold in Forgue came into being. Disease had overtaken the cattle on a farm; many were dying. In their difficulty, their owners resorted to what must have been an ancient custom They would propitiate the spirit who had brought the evil upon their herds by dedicating a fold to him. It may have been their neglect of this recognition that caused him to send the murrain. It is pretty certain that while Assembly and Presbytery might speak of dedications to the devil, the land was devoted to the only supernatural Being that these men knew. The object was to secure his favour. There was a piece of land in Forgue known till quite lately as "the deevil's faulie" or "the black faulie." It is now embraced in the farm of Boginspro, on the slope of the Flourmanhill, about four and a half miles from Huntly. The field extended to three or four acres. For long it lay untilled, but at the beginning of the nineteenth century a man from the neighbourhood of Bognie said "the

[1] Davidson, Inverurie, 308, 311.

deil had had lang eneuch o't and he wud hae a turn o't neist." He took his turn, cultivated it, and no evil befell him.[1]

The minister of King-Edward, writing in 1793, said that in a farm in that parish there was a small spot called Given Ground, which till recently it was thought sacrilege to break up with spade or plough. It was then converted into a cornfield, " nor has any interruption been given by the ancient proprietor." [2] On the farm of West Affleck, New Deer, was a Goodman's Fold where a " gaun plough was lowsed." [3]

On the farms of Belscamphie and Brogan in Slains there were pieces of land separated, either by a dyke or ditch, from the rest of the farm. They were known as the Goodman's land or the Goodman's Fauld. In 1649 the tenant was dealt with by the Church, and promised to labour the land.[4] Two parishes in the Presbytery of Fordyce provide evidence of such dedications. At a visitation of Boyndie in 1649 it was found there was a piece of land unlaboured called " the halie man's ley dedicated to superstitious uses." [5] In the following year, when the Presbytery visited Rathven, it was reported there was a small bit of land near Nether Buckie not laboured, but " men used to cast faills and deavets on it." The taboo was passing. The land was ordered to be tilled.[6]

Even the parish of Elgin had its Goodman's Craft. In 1602 some men from Clackmarras were brought before the Session to give a reason " quhy they reserved a peise land to the deuill callit the Gudmanis." [7] A year later an elder had to report the tenants for leaving " a piece land to the gudeman (deuill) for the noltis cause." Here the same reason is advanced for the practice as at Forgue. It is for the welfare of the cattle. To ensure health amongst the flocks and herds, a portion of a field was reserved for the goodman.

Strathbogie was noted for its " halie man's rigs." In August, 1651, it was admitted by Sir William Gordon of Lesmoir, Rhynie, that part of the Mains of Lesmoir was given away to the Goodman, and used not to be laboured, but fortified by the visitation of

[1] Brebner, In Presbytery of Turriff 200 Years Ago.
[2] S.A., King Edward, XI, 408. [3] Milne, Myths, 31.
[4] Pratt. Buchan, 452 ; Rust, Druidism, 41.
[5] Cramond, Church and Churchyard of Boyndie, 12.
[6] Cramond, Church and Churchyard of Rathven, 20.
[7] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 105.

the Presbytery " he had a mynd be the assistance of God to cause labour the same." [1] In November, 1646, William Siefwright and George Stronach in Glass were accused of sorcery in allotting some land to the old goodman, and promised to till and manure it.[2] In July, 1631, the land in Turterie, Rothiemay, dedicated to the goodman, was ordered by the Presbytery of Strathbogie to be manured.[3]

Sixty years later, John Clark in Rothiemay was delated for giving a piece of his land as " helly man's lye." A witness said the reason for Clark's action was that his predecessor in the farm had thirteen [4] head of cattle and horse that died. The motive was the same as at Forgue. John Clark's father had also at a former time given off a piece of land.[5]

At Killiesmont, in the parish of Keith, there was a Goodman's croft. It occupied a commanding position on rising ground, a mile or so north of the burgh. From the Rig, a magnificent range of hill and valley, embracing parts of the counties of Aberdeen, Banff, and Moray spreads out before the eye. If it were desired that any fire ritual should be visible to those at a far distance, one can conceive no arable spot more suited to the purpose. At the north end of the Rig, the rock came almost to the surface. The whole extent was small. From north to south it extended about two hundred yards, with a breadth of about a dozen yards. But at an earlier date it may have been more spacious. On the rock at the north end were cut nine cup holes arranged in three rows, with nine inches between the holes. It is said that James Scott, whose descendants are still to be found in the neighbourhood, resolved to bring the Rig under cultivation, but the moment the plough touched the devil's craft one of the oxen fell dead, killed by a fairy dart, or, as the folk put it, the animal was " shot a dead." Robert Watt, grandfather of James Watt, a recent tenant of Fieldhead, the farm on which most of the Rig is now included, resolved about a century ago to cultivate the dreaded piece of ground. In doing so, it was felt he took his life in his hands. He would not risk his oxen. He trenched it. Three women, whose surnames were long

[1] Stuart, Presbytery Book of Strathbogie, 208 f.
[2] *Ibid.*, 71. [3] Records of the Presbytery of Strathbogie.
[4] Or three—the reading is not clear.
[5] Records of Strathbogie Presbytery; Records of Rothiemay Kirk Session.

familiar in that district, Maggie Barber, Jane Turner, and Janet McConnachie, set themselves to watch by turn, expecting every moment to see the daring toiler shot by the fatal bolt. But there was no tragic happening. The rig yielded to cultivation. About 1860 the tenant removed the rock with the cup holes. Thus passed the last mark of the Halie man's rig.[1]

The practice of laying off a goodman's croft continued in some parts of Scotland later than what we have evidence of in the North. Sir James Young Simpson in 1861 stated that a relative of his bought a farm within twenty miles of Edinburgh not many years before. Amongst his first acts, after getting possession, was the enclosure of a small triangular corner with a stone wall. This was the " Goodman's croft," an offering to the devil that he might abstain from blighting or damaging the rest of the farm.

From the instances given in the North there would appear to have been two kinds of crofts. There was the croft with a long history, long dedicated to sacred purposes. Such was probably the Rig at Killiesmont. At the upper end, where there was the rocky foundation, was found among a heap of stones a rude cist which contained ashes. At King-Edward a law was opened on the farm of Strathairy in which was uncovered a small urn containing ashes. In digging away the earth many loose irregular stones were found, particularly round the base of the mount. In some places marks of fire were discovered. Near this was the Given Ground.[2] Probably the place of sepulture and the place of worship were one. They are remains of ancient religion. Sir Walter Scott seems to have shown his usual insight into the interpretation of the old customs when he said the Goodman's croft corresponds to the Temenos of the Greek Temple—a piece of land marked off from common uses and dedicated to the god.[3] Originally the Gi'en Rig appears to have been the seat of worship, where sacrifice was offered and the divine blessing invoked upon the cattle and produce of the field. In earlier times the centres of worship may have been few. Open sites visible from afar, such as Killiesmont, may have been favoured.

In the period referred to in the Church records, it appears as if it were essential there should be a Goodman's croft on every estate.

[1] Gregor, Banffshire Field Club, 1884, 97 ff.
[2] S.A., XI, 408.
[3] Demonology, 89.

At Rhynie the croft was on the Mains of Lesmoir. At Killiesmont it was on what was originally the Mains or home farm of the estate. One of the charges against Andro Man was "Thou has met and measured divers pieces of land called wards to the Hynd Knight whom thou confessis to be a spirit and puts four stanes in the four nooks of the ward and charms the samen, and thereby haills the guidis and preserves them frae the lunsancht, and all other diseases and thou forbiddis to cast faill or divett thereon or put plewis therein, and this thou did in the Manis of Innis, in the Manis of Caddel and in divers other places which thou confessis thyself and can nocht deny the same."[1] This seems to refer to a recrudescence of paganism. It was felt there should be in every parish or on every estate a dedication to what the Church authorities called the devil, but whom the common folks referred to in more affectionate terms as "the auld guidman" or "the Halyman." In the eyes of the prophets of the new faith, the ancient ritual was "a sacrifice to devils." It was discouraged. It was banned. To the Church it was a devil worship, but it is doubtful if ever it came to be so regarded by those who practised it. It was to this ancient cult they turned in their time of calamity and distress. When disease broke out in a herd one method of arresting it was by consecrating land to the Goodman. The Forgue farmer confesses it was because his "gudis" were falling away, that he left a piece of land unlaboured to try if that would effect a cure. The same motive inspired the Clackmarras dedication. It was employed at Rothiemay as a safeguard. The Rathven warlock cured cattle by "laying off wards to the Hynd Knight."

The ritual employed in dedicating a corner of a field is indicated in the Forgue case. The men went to a fauld and, probably repeating some words, promised to let it lie unlaboured. In token of this promise they cast some stones in over the dyke of the fold. The promise only remained valid as long as they retained their tacks. This differs from the dedication by a laird of a portion of his lands—this would be in perpetuity. Only in these cases would there be peril to the modern desecrators or cultivators, which makes one think the Forgue dedication which was broken up in the early years of last century may be much older than the

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 120.

one referred to in the Church records. As to the casting of stones, that might indicate man's renunciation of his right in the land. Dr. Davidson says it was the practice to throw stones upon the croft with some ceremonies.[1]

A curious survival, in which the Goodman's croft appears, was practised in Buchan at the beginning of the nineteenth century. When a tenant was put out of his farm against his will, on the last occasion he was ploughing he drove his plough with all the earth it could carry off the farm and unyoked it on a neighbouring farm. Certain spots were preferred for "lowsin a gaun plough," such as the Goodman's craft. By so doing the outgoing tenant took away the luck. Henceforth no tenant would ever prosper on the farm. It suggests the similar method of taking away the luck from a dwelling-house, sweeping it out clean and carrying away the sweepings.[2] The tenant of Honeynook, New Deer, in the latter half of the eighteenth century is said to have performed this quaint rite of "lowsin a gaun plough." Unwilling to leave the farm, in revenge he drove his twelve-oxen plough with all the earth it would hold off the farm and unyoked it on the neighbouring farm of West Affleck on a part called "the Goodman's Faul." Old people spoke of this action with great awe and reserve.[3]

Devil Compacts.—Besides witches and warlocks, there were others who had tendered their allegiance to the devil. They made compacts with the Prince of Darkness in some eerie churchyard or amid the ruins of some ancient castle. Those, who engaged themselves in this service, became bound to surrender themselves body and soul to Satan, at the end of a certain period. Dr. Gregor relates the story of a man who made such a compact. As the day approached for giving himself to his Master, he was overcome with fear. He told his friends. They met on the appointed day. The hour struck. In stalked the devil and rushed upon his thrall. Both disappeared in fire, leaving nothing behind but smoke and smell.[4]

Hell-fire clubs existed in the North-East till well through last century. The members pledged themselves to the devil's

[1] Inverurie, 152; for whole subject, Gregor, Banffshire Field Club, 1884, 97 ff.; Cramond, *Aberdeen Free Press*, 1st June, 1897.

[2] Cf. above. [3] Milne, Myths, 31; cf. S.N. and Q., IV. (1890), 160.

[4] Gregor, Notes, 75.

service and at their meetings indulged in an orgy of blasphemy and drunkenness. Once a year, it was said, in the darkness of the night, they celebrated the Communion in the devil's name. I have been told the names of individual members of such a club. All met a tragic death.

The members of a hell-fire club can hardly be regarded in the same light as those who dedicated land to the devil. The latter were in earnest, and the offering they made was in all sincerity to propitiate a Higher Power, be he named God or Devil. The former were men in revolt against the Supreme Disposer of events. They loved all uncleanness. They have their affinities with those who in a spirit of levity and irreverence drank the devil's health. At Drumoak in 1705, John Taylor is appointed to appear in the pillory in sackcloth for having drunk the devil's health.[1] By itself this may have been merely the irresponsible act of a drunken man, though intoxication is not given as an excuse. On the other hand, there seems concerted action on the part of some Turriff worthies. On 26th August, 1647, compeared before the Presbytery Andrew Hogs in Turriff and "confessed y^t on the Lord's Day, he hade drunken the devill's good health at the Cross of Turriff, confusione to the parsone of Turreff, and to the Covenant, and with him Jon Burnet, Gilbert Harper and Donald MacKedy, pyper, piping to the drink, and Wm. Kay who came all from the house of Delgatie."[2]

In October of the same year, Donald McKeddie asserted to the Presbytery that he was "peied to be piper at ye drinking of ye devell's health at the Cross of Turriff and refused y^t he drank it himself."[3] This would suggest a united homage to the devil, not a considered obedience, but rather the action of men revolting against the religion of the day and asserting they belonged to a different fold. It might very well be that lingering deep down in their hearts was the consciousness of the worship of other days, different from the rigours of the Church whose strong arm they felt from time to time. They were really at heart nature worshippers. Probably this was also the position of John Nauchtie in Elgin. Brought before the Session in 1602 for performing all agricultural operations on Sunday, he said the devil had as great power as God, and they who served him

[1] Henderson, Lower Deeside, 94.
[2] Brebner, In Turriff Presbytery. [3] *Ibid.*

were in as good case as they who served God. To bring home to him the falsity of this claim, he was mulcted in a penalty of 40s. and ordered to do penance.[1]

With many of the common folks who went regularly to church, the devil was a more important factor in their life than God. He seemed to come more directly in touch with them. He was reputed to have gone about in person for the better part of a winter on the Garrol Hill in Durris.[2] The Laird of Dunideer had a noted midnight encounter with the Dusky Potentate.[3] The latter went roaring round the braes about Bruxie and Atherb. He tore up the earth and stones with his cloven hoofs, and with his horns " boxed " the hillocks like an infuriated bull.[4] Those who encountered him were able to describe his appearance. " Ow he wiz a gay decent like chiel, if he hidna had a terrible heid o' horns an fearfu' lang hairy legs wi' great cloven feet, but Lord, man, he hid a terrible smell o' brimstane." [5] This is a Corgarff testimony, and it fairly represents the popular belief. There are many traces of his wanderings on the earth. There is a rock pool in a stream passing the Dhu Craig near the village of Newmill, Keith. On the edge of the pool are some hollows worn away by the action of the water and the small stones carried down by the burn. These hollows have the shape of a seat. They were believed to be caused by the devil sitting there and leaving his mark. The pool is known as

> The Pot o' Pittentyoul
> Fahr the deil gya the youl.

Methlick shows traces of a visitation. The " devil's stane " is in a marshy part of the Belmuire wood on the North side of the Ythan. On the stone are some curious marks resembling cloven hoofs, being the impress of the devil's feet.[6] Similar stories of the marks left of the devil's hands and feet are to be found in German popular tales.[7]

The very name by which the devil was called shows he was

[1] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 102.
[2] Grant, Tales of the Glens, 59.
[3] *Ibid.*, 60.
[4] Milne. Myths, 29.
[5] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, VII, 289.
[6] Jervise, Epitaphs, II, 29.
[7] Thorpe, Northern Mythology, I. 234.

not the terror he was later represented to be. Amongst the Celts he is Black Donald.[1] In the Danish traditions he appears as Old Eric. Old Eric is present at the witch dances on St. John's Eve.[2] In Banffshire I have heard an aged dame tell a story of her youth in which a wrathful scytheman, struggling to cut a flattened and twisted crop, "wussed that Auld Sandy would come and burn up the corn with the blazes o' his fury." In the olden time there was something of familiarity, if not indeed of affection, in the way the devil was regarded.

[1] Campbell, Superstitions of Scottish Highlanders, 291.
[2] Thorpe, *op. cit.*, II, 158, 188.

PART II.

THE BLACK ART.

CHAPTER I.

ORGANISATION AND RITUAL.

The witch cult stands out clearly in the trials of the Aberdeen witches of the sixteenth century, and the Auldearn witches of the seventeenth. From the evidence then adduced, it would appear that a hundred years after the Reformation a fully organised cult was still operative in, at least, some parts of the North-East. In Aberdeen, Barbara Card, witch, was burned on the Heading Hill in 1590. In 1594 a few old women met a like fate, but it was only after a commission had been issued by King James VI, author of the Dæmonologie, that a widespread inquisition and persecution took place. In 1596-97 twenty-six persons were seized, imprisoned and tortured. Of these, two women died from the effects of their sufferings, and their bodies were dragged through the streets. The other twenty-three women and one man met their death at the stake. In September, 1597, the Aberdeen Town Council voted an honorarium of forty marks to Gilbert Barnes, their common servant, for " awaiting on the witches and other common labours." The Dean of Guild and the Town Clerk for their extra services, including " the matter of the witches," are likewise recompensed.[1]

The confessions of the Auldearn witches are of supreme importance. There are four depositions of Isobel Gowdie, very detailed and self-consistent. Her testimony and that of the other members of the band as to witch organisation and ritual are confirmed from other sources. These confessions have the added value that they were not extorted under threats of violence, but were given freely, without compulsion of any kind. Gowdie was the wife of a farmer and of attractive appearance. In the ruins of the Castle of Inshoch she met the individual who in the trials is described as " the devil " and who lured her from her

[1] Extracts from the Council Register, II, 155 ff.

peaceful home. Later she renounced the black arts, made confession, and was condemned in the church of Auldearn where she had renounced her baptism. About the same time as the Auldearn coven were giving their witness, the Synod of Aberdeen was dealing with the problem within its bounds. At its meeting in 1669, " the fearful and damnable practice of witchcraft and charming " was reported as still much abounding in the land. All consulters with witches and charmers were to be dealt with. By the close of the seventeenth century the witch organisation was beginning to yield before the rigours of civil and ecclesiastical authority. Individual witches, or witches in bands of two or three, pursued their craft till well through the nineteenth century, but the glory and glamour of the cultus had largely departed. The witches had lost prestige. Advancing knowledge was slowly emancipating the peasantry from their thrall. In the beginning of this period, however, the witch organisation challenged the authority of Church and State, and for a century and a half, it exercised a more powerful influence on the daily life of the common people than king or presbyter. Only later were the witch bands broken up, their sole representative a despised, if feared, aged crone who tenanted some lonely shieling in a remote hillside.

1. Organisation.

The Grand Master was the Devil. In the witch trials he is usually so named, though to the witches he was God incarnate, to whom they paid divine honours. The accusation was made against Marion Grant of Aberdeen in 1596 that " the Deuill quhome thow callis thy god . . . causit the worship him on thy kneis as thy lord." [1] Isobel Gowdie confessed that he " maid vs beliew that ther wes no God besyd him, ve call him ' owr Lord ' . . . at each tyme, quhan ve wold meitt with him, we behoowit to ryse and mak our courtesie: and we wold say ' Ye ar welcom owr Lord ' and ' how doe ye, my Lord.' " [2] In the charge against Jonet Rendall, an Orkney witch, it was stated " the devill appeirit to you, Quhom ye called Walliman." [3]

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 171 f.
[2] Pitcairn, Criminal Trials, III, 605, 607, 613.
[3] County Folk-Lore, III (O. and S.), 103.

A curious name given to the devil in the Aberdeen trials, and seemingly restricted to the North-East is Christsonday. In the trial of Andro Man, the Grand Master is several times referred to as his " Master Christsonday." [1] This word is also employed as the equivalent of Sunday. In the trial of Thomas Leyis it is stated " The said bairn should be born on ane Chryistsonday." [2]

Appearance of Devil.—At Aberdeen Ellen Gray admitted that " the Devill, thy Maister apperit to thee in the scheap of ane agit man, beirdit, with a quhyt gown and a thrummit hatt." Andro Man " confesses that Crystsunday cum to hym in liknes of ane fair angell, and clad in quhyt claythis." In both these instances he is arrayed in white. It was part of the dittay against Christen Mitchell that " Satan apperit to the in the lyknes of a littil crippill man." Marion Grant acknowledged that " the deuill, quhom thow callis thy god . . . apperit to the in ane gryte man, his lickness, in silkin abuilzeament withe ane quhyt candill in his hand." [3] Jonet Rendall of Orkney saw the devil " claid in quhyt cloathis, with ane quhyt head and ane gray beard." [4] Isobel Gowdie says " He was a meikle black roch man. Sometimes he had boots and sometimes shoes on his foot, but still [i.e. always] his foot are forked and cloven." [5] None of the descriptions given here are so vivid and picturesque as that furnished of the Grand Master at the famous assembly in the Kirk of North Berwick on Halloween, 1590: " The dewill stert up in the pulpett, lyk ane mekle blak man, with ane blak baird stikand out like ane gettis [goat's] baird, and ane hie ribbit nois, lyk the beik of ane halk, with ane lang rumpill " (tail).[6] This devil evidently looked the part. The latest witness is Margaret Nin-Gilbert of Thurso who met the devil in 1719 " in the way, in the likeness of a man, and engaged her to take on with him, which she consented to: and she said she knew him to be the devil, or he parted with her." [7] But the devil might also appear in the likeness of a woman, e.g. as the Queen of Elphen. It was stated in the dittay against Andro Man that " thrie scoir yeris sensyne or thairby, the Devill, thy maister, come to thy motheris

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 121. [2] *Ibid.*, 98.
[3] *Ibid.*, 124, 127, 164, 172.
[4] County Folk-Lore, III (O. and S.), 103.
[5] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 603.
[6] Dalyell, Darker Superstitions, 548.
[7] Sharpe, Witchcraft, 191.

hous, in the liknes and scheap of a woman, quhom thow callis the Quene of Elphen." The Queen of Elphen is here represented as an associate devil, to whom the same homage is paid, for later, in Man's confession, he admits "that the Quene of Elphen hes a grip of all the craft, but Christsonday is the gudeman and hes all power vnder God." Those who convene with them at the Binloch and Binhill "kiss Christsonday and the Queen of Elphin."[1] Marion Grant acknowledged in the same year at Aberdeen "that the Devill, thy maister, quhome thow termes Christsonday, causit the dans sindrie tymes with him, and with Our Ladye, quha as thou sayes was a fine woman, cled in a quhyt walicot."[2] At Aberdeen there was evidently a female as well as a male devil, to whom homage was rendered. At Forfar, in 1662, Marjory Ritchie "willingly and friely declared that the divill appeired to her thrie several tymes in the similitude of a womane."[3] But the devil could change himself into any shape and act the part of any character he might assume. He appeared as a branded dog to Jonet Coupar at the Brig of Brechin in 1650. Nine witnesses saw the dog accost her there. Jonet was burned.[4] On one occasion a little black dog followed the Rev. John Mill of Dunrossness and his man Hector, whose mind was filled with fears. The venerable minister spoke words of cheer: "Toots man, du needna fear: it's me he wants, no dea" (i.e. "it is me, he wants, not thee").[5] It was a common belief in the North that the devil assumed the disguise of a dog. In the nineteenth century Peter Macdonald coming up the Fochabers Brae one dark night was followed by a dog. It was no ordinary tyke. When he stopped, it stopped; when he moved on, it moved. It was "the auld man" himself. A cat might also envelop the evil spirit. At the trial of Jonet Irving in 1616, it was reported that the devil, while in the form of a woman, on hearing Christ's name uttered, ran "out at the holl of the door lyk a black catt." This was a second metamorphosis. A transformation which has been misunderstood by some English writers is that in which the devil appears in the form of a "staig." This is not a stag, but a horse

[1] Sp. Misc., III, 119-21. [2] *Ibid.*, 171.
[3] Kinloch, Reliquiae Antiquae Scotticae, 144.
[4] Around the Ancient City, 427.
[5] Diary of John Mill, xxxi.

or stallion. Andro Man saw Christsonday come "out of the snaw in likness of a staig." [1] The devil appeared to Margaret Clerk at Aberdeen in the likeness of a "grey staig," with whom she had secret converse. He had already appeared to her in the form of a horse in a "how and den" between Tullyheine and Lumphanan.[2] In the Highlands a stag was a natural form for him to assume. In this guise he appeared in Mar Forest to Mr. Cattanach, teacher of Corgarff, who had gone thither to shoot a deer. He saw a very fine stag, fired, and struck its ribs, but the bullet glanced off. He tried several more shots but the result was the same. Passing the night in a shieling he heard a most fearsome noise which only ceased when he cried out in God's name. "It wiz jist Auld Hornie," he confided, as he related his experience.[3] At Auldearn "sometym he vold be lyk a stirk, a bull, a deir, a rae or a dowg." [4] He seems to have appeared in the traditional guise of an animal with a hairy skin, with hoofs and tail.

At Aberdeen Agnes Webster said Satan appeared in the likeness of a lamb "quhom thow callis thy God and bletit on the, and thairefter spak to the and [baid the] be his servand." [5] The Morayshire tradition did not obtain here. There the witch was never seen in the form of a lamb, which was the symbol of the Agnus Dei. But this doubtless was a local development. In Banffshire, too, as late as the early years of the nineteenth century, a sheep might be merely the outer semblance of a witch "or even auld Hornie himself." [6] Amongst the smaller creatures the hare might enclose within its furry coat not only the witch, but also her master. At the trial of Margaret Philp at Cullen for witchcraft, witnesses deponed they saw a spirit—a beast like a hare—come into Margaret's house about twelve noon. The spirit said, "Give me that gleyed wiche Maggie Soullie, for she is mine." The hare did drink of the wort [i.e. new beer]. On examination, Margaret Soullie confessed that the voice that spoke to her was the voice of the devil.[7] A rarer manifestation was that of the devil in the likeness of a "futret."

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 121.
[2] *Ibid.*, 157, 160.
[3] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, VII (1889), 287 f.
[4] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 613.
[5] Sp. Misc., I, 129.
[6] Calder, Glenlivet Gleanings, 10 f.
[7] Cramond, Church of Rathven, 22 ff.

He appeared to Jonet Lucas, in the goodwife of Pitmurchie's chamber, where the goodman was himself lying, in the form of a four-footed beast, specially like a futret, and sometimes like a cat, and ran about the bed, where Pitmurchie was lying.[1] This testimony is of value in view of Elworthy's statement: "there does not seem to be any record of witches assuming its shape," i.e. a weasel's.[2] Here the witch devil appears to Jonet Lucas in that guise. And the witch herself has been known to clothe herself in the outer habiliments of a weasel.[3]

Officers.—Under the devil one or more officers were appointed by him in each district. Isobel Gowdie acknowledged that "John Young in Mebestown is officer to our Coven," and again "John Young in Mebestown, our officer, did drive the plough." Janet Breadheid indicates a change of officer. "John Taylor, my husband, was then officer, but John Young in Mabestoune is now officer to my Coeven. When I first came there, the Devil called them all by their names on the book: and my husband then called them at the door."[4] Here is evidence of a roll call, in which the devil and his officer took part. It served the two-fold purpose of marking the absentees and securing that only those named should be admitted to the assembly.

A personal attendant upon the devil is mentioned. In the dittay against Isobel Ritchie of Aberdeen, it was stated that "at that time, thou received thy honours from the Devil thy master, and was appointed by him in all times thereafter his special domestic servant and furriour."[5] A furriour is a quartermaster. Isobel would have to attend upon her master at meals.

The Maiden of the Coven occupied a privileged position. She was usually a girl of some personal attractions, whom the devil placed next himself, and to whom he paid special attention, neglecting the old hags. In the picturesque language of Isobel Gowdie "when we are at meat, or in any other place whatever, the maiden of each coven sits above the rest, next the devil, and she serves the devil, for all the old people he cares not for, and are weak and unmeet for him. He will be with her and us

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 148. [2] Elworthy, The Evil Eye, 31.
[3] Cf. The Golden Ass of Apuleius, Book II.
[4] Pitcairn, Criminal Trials, III, 603, 605, 617.
[5] Sp. Misc., I. 142; modernised spelling adopted here and usually in longer quotations.

all like a weath horse after mearis." [1] Under the devil, the officer was the head over the men, and the maiden over the women.

Rulers (which may be another name for officers) are referred to by Janet Breadheid. " When we had great meetings, Walter Ledy in Penick, my husband, and Alexander Elder, next to the devil, were rulers, and when there were but fewer, I myself, the deceased Jean Sutherland, Bessie Hay, Bessie Wilson and Janet Burnett would rule them." [2] There was plainly a hierarchy amongst the witches.

The coven, sometimes coeven, covine, was a band composed of twelve witches and an officer, all under the command of the Grand Master. They were bound to attend the local meetings, where they were instructed in, and practised, their art. Isobel Gowdie sums up the local organisation: " Jean Mairten is maiden of our Coeven. John Young is officer to our coven . . . there are thirteen persons in each coven: and each one of us has a spirit to wait upon us, when we please to call upon him. I remember not all the spirits' names, but there is one called Swein, who waits upon the said Margaret Wilson in Auldearn: he is still [i.e. always] clothed in grass-green. The next spirit is Rorie who waits upon Bessie Wilson in Auldearn: he is still clothed in yellow." [3] Gowdie continues to name the spirits attaching to the different members of the coven. These spirits were human beings of the opposite sex to that of the witch. They waited upon her, especially on the occasion of the great assemblies.

2. Initiation.

The initiates dedicated themselves to the devil, who appeared in person, usually in the guise of a man. At the great sabbats he was arrayed in grand attire. On other occasions he wore ordinary dress.

At the initiatory ceremony the devil in human form, clad in wonderful garb, admitted the novitiates. Sometimes children were received. At Forfar in 1661 Jonet Howat was so young that when Isobel Syrrie presented her to the devil he said, " what had he to doe with such a young barne as schoe? " Isobel replied " Schoe is my maiden. Taik her to yow," and he

[1] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 613.
[2] *Ibid.*, 617.
[3] *Ibid.*, 603, 606.

accepted her.[1] Andro Man lived to testify that he was " bot a boy," when three score years before, the Queen of Elphen appeared to him and engaged him in the devil's service.[2]

The ceremony of initiation might be performed in private. Annabel Stewart confessed that in harvest time the devil, in the shape of a black man, had come to her mother's house and required the deponent to give herself up to him. This seems to have been a private initiation. But in the great days of the witches' power there was a profession of faith and admission either at the local meetings or at a larger assembly. There might be both a public (public at least as far as being open to all the witch bands) and a private initiatory rite. Probably it was usually so. Isobel Gowdie first met the devil on the road between two farm steadings. and there " covenanted in a manner " with him. She promised to meet him at night in the kirk of Auldearn. Here took place her public initiation. The first thing she did was to renounce her baptism, thereby renouncing the Christian faith. " I denied my baptism." The next act was the dedication of herself, body and soul, to the new service. " I did put one of my hands to the crown of my head, and the other to the sole of my foot, and then renounced all betwixt my two hands to the devil." With a black book in his hand the devil occupied the reader's desk in the church,[3] which seems to have been a favourite place for the witch conventions. For Janet Breadheid was initiated at a great assembly in the kirk of Nairn, three covens being present, and the devil as at Auldearn occupying the reader's desk.[4] But the meetings might be held in the open air in any sequestered spot. In comparatively recent times, when the witch covens were broken up, the seashore in both Orkney and Shetland provided the scene for the self-surrender of the devotee to the devil. At midnight, she went and lay down upon the beach below the flood-tide mark. She then put her left hand under the sole of her foot and her right hand on the top of her head, and repeated three times, " The muckle maister De'il tak what's atween dis twa haunds." The devil then appeared and clinched the bargain. There was now no drawing back. The woman became his slave with power over land and

[1] Kinloch, *op. cit.*, 114 ; cf. 124.
[2] Sp. Misc., I, 119.
[3] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 603.
[4] *Ibid.*, 616.

sea.[1] It was the same complete surrender to the Prince of Darkness. There were some differences in the environment. Helen Fraser counselled "Cristane Henderson, vulgo called Meikle Cristane, to put her one hand to the crown of her head, and the other to the sole of her foot and so beteich (i.e. consign) whatever was between her hands to the devil, and she should want nothing she should wish or desire." [2] It is noteworthy that Helen gave this counsel to Cristane and that the devil was not present.

After this act of self-dedication, a new name was given. These names, peculiar to the Scottish cult,[3] seem to have been suggested by some personal quality or characteristic of the recipient. Often part of the old name was retained. Annabel became Annipy, because the devil took her by the hand and nipped her arm, which continued to be sore for the space of half an hour. Isobel Gowdie testifies the devil gave each of them nicknames, surely a very appropriate description of the new name. Among the names appear: Pickle nearest the wind, Through the Corn-yard, Bessie Bauld, Ower the dyke with it, Able and Stout.[4] Under her new name the initiate was entered on the local roll of witches. This naming might be called baptism. Isobel Gowdie confessed "Margaret Brodie in Auldearn held me up to the devil to be baptised by him, and he marked me on the showlder and he sukett owt my blood at that mark, and spowted it in his hand, and sprinkling it on my head, said 'I baptise the, Janet, in my awin name.'" [5] The baptism is in blood. Janet Breadheid describes her own baptism in similar terms. The new name bestowed on her is Christian. These two names lack the peculiarities that are often found. The baptism was evidently an imitation of the Christian baptism of infants, for Margaret Brodie "held up" Isobel Gowdie to be baptised.

The outward and visible sign of the covenant with the devil was the nip or mark which he made. Marion Grant confessed that the devil "gave her his token in her left hand with a vehement nip in the thick of her hand at the shackle bone." [6] In the charge against Andro Man it was stated that "Christsonday beatt a mark on the third fynger of thy richt hand quhilk thow hes yet to schaw." [7] Of Christen Mitchell it was said "the devil

[1] See County Folk-Lore, III (O. and S.), 51 f.; a fuller and slightly different account is given by Mr. Dennison.

[2] Sp. Misc., I, 107.

[3] Murray, The Witch Cult, 85.

[4] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 606, 615.

[5] *Ibid.*, 603.

[6] Sp. Misc., 1, 172.

[7] *Ibid.*, 120 f.

gave thee a nip on the back of thy right hand, for a mark that thou wast one of his number." [1] This was the devil's mark proper, made by his teeth or claws on the body of the novice. Another mark, also reckoned the devil's mark and of capital importance in the witch trials, was a natural mark or growth somewhere on the body. The possession of either of these marks was regarded as clear evidence that the panel was in league with the devil.

The crowning act was copulation. Marion Grant admitted, at her trial, that after the devil appeared to her, and gave her his token in her left hand, he seduced her.[2] In the case of a male witch, his cohabitation was with a female devil. Andro Man associated with the Queen of Elphen.[3]

Great powers were conferred upon the witch, to cure and to blight. Kathrine Fernsche promised her son, by information of the devil, that his blood should never be drawn.[4] To the Orkney novitiate, the promise was made. "There was neither man nor beast sick, that were not deadly by the hand of God, but she, getting alms and praying to Walliman he should heal the same, and if she got no alms, he would be angry and make their beasts die." [5] This was the promise in which the witch trusted, and on the strength of which she carried on her activities. Andro Man admitted "the Quene of Elphen promesit to the, that thow suld know all thingis, and suld help and cuir all sort of seikness except stane deid, and that thow suld be weill interteneit." [6] The whole rite of initiation in a barbarous age was a solemn ceremony, well calculated to produce a lasting impression upon the mind of the neophyte. She was now a member of a different caste, endued with supernatural powers, ready to sacrifice honour, as she had already sacrificed virtue, to her god. In later days, when the iron hand of the Church rendered it impossible to hold the great Sabbats, the least frequented spot was chosen for the admission of a new convert. The witch ritual was performed by some solitary survivor, who was thus handing on the secrets of her art to another generation. The scene might be a churchyard, and there at the solemn midnight hour, one more made her compact with the devil and was initiated into the fellowship of the weird sisterhood.

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 165. [2] *Ibid.*, 172. [3] *Ibid.*, 119.
[4] *Ibid.*, 187. [5] Register of Privy Council, 2nd ser., VIII, 455 ff.
[6] Sp. Misc., I, 119.

CHAPTER II.

CONVENTIONS.

1. Means of Transport.

One of the accusations against the witches was that they attended the great conventions. If it was merely a local meeting, the problem of transport presented no difficulty. They went on foot. At Strathdown, in the eighteenth century, the witches went along the side of the river Avon to Craic-pol-nain, fording the river on foot.[1] Colin Massie, the warlock of Glendye, made his way to the witch-gatherings, riding on a huge black boar.[2] If it were a long journey, a horse might be taken from a stable over whose doorway there was no horse shoe suspended to bar the ingress of the witches. A farmer, in the Keith district, went into his stable one morning and found one of his horses covered with sweat, looking as if it had just come from a hard ride. He tried in vain to make it rise. All its strength was gone. He sent for the canny woman of the district, who, on arrival, looked at the beast and said, "Nae winner yer horse is nae able t' rise. He's been in Spain sin the streen." She then flapped her apron in its face. Up it jumped, as if nothing had happened.[3] It was believed that, seated upon a horse, a witch might cover vast tracks of country during the night. Between the witch which thus employs a horse, and the nightmare, there is much in common. Both infest stables at night, mounting the steeds they find there. But the nightmare is usually regarded as a sort of goblin, a night hag which attacked horses and human beings, whereas the witch carried on her operations by day as well as night. Besides these more or less normal means of locomotion, the witch by her own

[1] Grant Stewart, Popular Superstitions, 174.
[2] Jas. Grant, Tales of the Glens, 64.
[3] Gregor, Banffshire Field Club, 56.

declarations, no less than in popular repute, had other and more magical ways of reaching her destination. She might ride on a straw when moving from place to place. Isobel Gowdie deponed, " I had a little horse and would say, ' Horse and Hattock in the Divellis name ' : and then ve vold flie away, quhair ve vold be, ewin as strawes wold flie wpon an hei-way." The horse was imaginary, for she continues : " We will flie lyk strawes quhan we pleas : wild-strawes and corne-strawes wil be horses to ws, as ve put thaim betwixt our foot and say, ' Horse and Hattock in the Divellis name ' . . . Quhan we wold ryd, we tak windle-strawes or been-stakes [i.e. bean stalks] and put them betwixt owr foot and say thryse,

> Horse and Hattock, horse and goe,
> Horse and pellatis, ho ! ho !

And immediatelie we flie away whair euer we wold . . . Barbara Ronald in Brightmanney and I read on an horse quhich ve vold mak of a straw or beein-stalk." [1] It was a ritual transformation of the straw into a horse. In the same way a riddle or sieve could become the chariot of the witch on her journeys through the air. Grissel Urral's mother, according to common report in 1622, " was a witche " and " saillit in a riddell " or " rowit in a riddell." [2] The evil spirit said to Margaret Soullie, " Thou and I will sail in the riddle together this night." [3] The sieve was conceived by many peoples as a suitable means of transport for witches, elves, and other uncanny creatures. Some supernatural quality seemed to attach to it, for it was almost universally employed in divination.[4] Broomsticks are also represented as means of the witches' aerial excursions.[5] They appear in the Folklore of the Hindu, as well as in European popular beliefs. Like the sieve, the broom or besom seems to have served some high purpose in the economy of the upper air. No one would ever step over a besom laid along the threshold of the house inside.[6] Before the witch could accomplish her journey through the air, she would anoint the broomstick with magic ointment.[7] Or she might anoint herself

[1] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 604, 608, 613.
[2] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 172.
[3] Cramond, Church of Rathven, 22 ff.
[4] Pp. 269 ff. [5] S.A. (Kirkmichael), XII. 465.
[6] Cf. Kelly, Curiosities, 225 f.
[7] Cf. Thorpe, Northern Mythology, II, 184 f. ; Kelly, *op. cit.*, 225 f.

with this potent salve, thereby transforming herself into any creature whose guise she desired to assume. This witch ointment was believed to be composed of dead bodies, especially those of unbaptised children, and was employed for other purposes as well. While witches, in the almost universal belief of mankind, rode to their great meetings on a stick or straw or a bean-stalk, probably their normal method of going about their business was by changing themselves into the shape of some four-footed creature. They thus escaped observation, and were enabled to engage in their nefarious work without immediate identification and arrest.

Among the commonest of all forms for a witch to assume was that of a hare. Traces of belief in the witch-hare are to be met with in every part of the North. According to the notes of the minister of Lumphanan, Isobel Robbie was commonly seen in the form of a hare, passing through the town. When the hare disappeared from sight, she came into view.[1] About 1770, a grand-aunt of John Milne, Atherb, saw in the early morning a hare at a ford in a stream in the Pitfour estate. She watched the creature paddle with its forefeet in the water, and then ascend the bank, and scratch the turf like a cat. To her dying day this lady insisted that the hare was a witch and that she was milking somebody's cow as she played her antics in the field.[2] Her attitude would fairly represent the outlook of the rural population of the period. In Kincardineshire, the mother of the Glendye Warlock was often seen speeding across the fields in the likeness of a hare. After two unsuccessful attempts, young Russell of Tillyfroskie shot and wounded a hare, his gun this time being loaded with a sixpence. Looking down a ravine where the hare had fallen, he saw in its stead an old woman with dishevelled hair, writhing in agony. According to a primitive belief, the effusion of blood restored the witch to her human shape, and the witch-hare of Glendye, having received a mortal wound, resumed its human form.[3] A witch or warlock in the semblance of an animal or bird was impervious to a leaden bullet. The gun must be loaded with a sixpence. Some asserted that a crooked sixpence was essential. A hare was a form that enabled the witch to perform in safety her cantrips in the open, bewitching farm implements, destroying

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 191. [2] Milne, Myths, 12.
[3] Grant, Tales of the Glens, 66.

corn and grass, and bringing disease upon the sheep and cattle. Equally this metamorphosis rendered her liable to all the perils that beset the four-footed creatures of the field. There was many a story told of wounds received by the witch-hare. Isobel Gowdie speaks for herself and her sisters when she says: "The dogs will sometimes get some bites of us, when we are in the shape of hares, but will not get us killed. When we turn out of a hare's likeness into our own shape we will have the bites and rives and scratches on our bodies." [1] Many tales were current in Corgarff of a hare being wounded, and then of a witch, bleeding or injured, being found in bed.[2] Allaster Caddell, in Coull, Deeside, one day spied a huge hare nibbling in the vicinity of his house. He shot and wounded it, but it managed to escape, disappearing in a mysterious way near the house of William N. From this, Allaster concluded it was a witch and none other than the mother of the said William. Suspicion became certainty when he heard that this poor woman died in agony that night. The case came before both the church and civil courts in 1702.[3] Two maiden sisters, reputed to be witches, lived at Toux, Old Deer. The neighbours were troubled by a hare running about at night. Several tried to shoot it. It was believed to be one of the sisters. John Milne put an old cross crooked sixpence in his gun and fired at it, but it got away. He was sure he had hit it. Next day it was known that one of the sisters was dead. The survivor would let no one see the corpse till it was "dressed" and coffined. Every one believed Milne had shot the woman. He never throve afterwards.[4] This connection of the hare with the witch doubtless accounts for the ill-luck with which it has been associated. If a hare crossed the path of a farmer on his way to market, it was an evil omen. If he were seated in his trap, he instinctively tightened the reins, and kept a stricter watch upon his cob. A fisherman has the same dread of the accursed creature. Its name must not be mentioned at sea. As a witch associate, it was no persona grata with the ancient god of the ocean. If a leg or legs of a hare were found in a boat, it was enough to keep the crew from venturing to sea that day. The placing of a "baudies

[1] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 611.
[2] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, VII, 284 ff.
[3] *Aberdeen Journal*, Notes and Queries, III, 42.
[4] Milne, Myths, 12.

fit " there was looked upon as the action of an enemy, a mean, contemptible enemy, who had thus summoned to his aid the powers of darkness.

Professor Rhys says that the " faculty of turning one's self into a hare at will is regarded as hereditary in certain families in Wales, but it is confined to the women, none of the male relatives being ever supposed capable of such a change of nature." [1] In the North-East of Scotland there seems to have been the same limitation as to the sex of the witch-hare. When wounded, it always turned out to be an old woman. It is easy to see how, once it originated, belief in animal transformations was perpetuated amongst a people that found life on every side touched by mystery. In the case of the hare, its fleetness of foot, its semi-erect posture when sitting, its almost human cry when brought to bay, its not infrequent invasion of the cottage home, when pursued, all combined to foster the belief that this four-footed creature was more than the inoffensive animal it seemed to be, that its furry coat at times enveloped the soul of a witch, which for the moment had forsaken its human tenement.

Similar reasons would weigh in perpetuating the primitive faith in cat metamorphoses. " Its noiseless and stealthy motions, its persevering watchfulness, its extraordinary agility and tenacity of life, its diabolic caterwauling prowling habits, deceitful spring, and the luminous appearance of its eyes in the dark would alone suffice to procure it the name of unearthly, but when infuriated, glaring, bristling, and spitting, it forms a vivid representation of a perfect demon." [2] Ellen Gray is charged with twice appearing as a cat.[3] Isobel Gowdie says all the " coeven did fflie lyk cattis " (i.e. in the semblance of cats) with the exception of herself and one other.[4] The cat belonging to the Laird of Pitfodils was a witch. On one occasion, its owner saw it scampering through the " clash," a piece of boggy ground behind the north-east shoulder of the Two-mile Cross. When later it jumped up on his table, as was its custom, he enquired what it had been doing when he saw it. To which the cat replied, " Whare ye see me ance, ye sall see me nae mair," and forthwith worried him to death.[5] The Thurso witches assumed the shape of cats.

[1] Rhys, Celtic Heathendom, 199.
[2] Campbell, Witchcraft, 34.
[3] Sp. Misc., I, 127.
[4] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 613.
[5] Note to The Historie of the Baron of Petfoddils, 1839.

William Montgomery, carpenter, residing at Burnside of Scrabster, petitioned the Sheriff in December, 1718, representing that his house was infested with cats to such an extent that neither he nor his family could with safety continue to reside in it. His servant maid reported she heard the cats "speak among themselves." So unbearable became the conditions that Montgomery took his sword and laid about him to some purpose, for two of the cats were killed and one wounded. There was peace that night, but it was found that two witches had died, and that a third, Margaret Nin-Gilbert, in Owst, had had her leg broken. It finally withered and fell off. She confessed she was present in Montgomery's house in the likeness of a cat and that her broken limb was due to a stroke received from him. She was confined to prison where she died, and thus escaped the flames.[1] The good wife of Laggan, a noted witch, on the occasion of her last and fatal adventure assumed, first the form of a cat, and then that of a raven.[2] The belief in the ability to transform oneself into the similitude of a cat has a long history. Among the Oraons or Uraons, a primitive tribe of Bengal, "it is believed some women have the power to change their soul into a black cat, who then goes about in the houses where there are sick people. Such a cat has a peculiar way of mewing quite different from its brethren, and is easily recognised. . . . Any wound inflicted on the cat will be inflicted on her [the witch], and if they cut its ears or break its legs or put out its eyes, the woman will suffer the same mutilation." [3]

Like the hare, the cat because of its associations was believed to be a bringer of ill-luck. It was unlucky to shoot a cat. Such an action would be attended with evil consequences. If one met a black cat when setting out on a journey, it was an evil portent.

Another form the witch was believed to inhabit was the crow or any member of the crow family. The magpie was sometimes called the devil's bird and was believed to have a drop of the devil's blood on its tongue.[4] It was a favourite shape for the witch to assume, as in this guise she could visit her neighbours without exciting suspicion. Isobel Gowdie says, "I went in (to a house) in the likeness of a kea." [5] In 1653, at Alves, John

[1] Scott, Letters on Demonology, 337. [3] Grant Stewart, *op. cit.*, 192 f.
[2] Rev. P. Dehons, S.J., Religion and Customs of the Uraons, quoted in Balder, II, 311.
[4] Cf. Gregor, Notes, 138. [5] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 605.

Dawson was dealt with by the Session for slandering John Fraser in Findhorn, by accusing him of witchcraft. It was alleged that Dawson said a corbie flew from off Fraser's house upon his salmon net, with the result that for sundry tides thereafter he caught no salmon. Dawson had asserted that Fraser was the corbie, and in its likeness had wronged him.[1] About 1802, a man entered a prosecution in the Sheriff Court at Lerwick against a woman for witchcraft. He stated she assumed the form of a raven, and in that shape killed his cattle and prevented the milk of his cows yielding any butter.[2] This belief in the witch-crow, a belief found also in ancient Greece and Rome, rendered it a bird of ill-omen. When it lighted upon a house, it was a sign that soon there would be a death. It was unlucky to tamper with their habitations. A Buchan Laird destroyed a large rookery. Since then, he never throve. When crows, of their own accord, remove their nesting places from an estate, it augurs ill for the proprietor.

Other creatures were believed to be from time to time the abode of the witch spirits. At Elgin, in 1597, Andrew Hossack's wife was accused of witchcraft and of assuming the form of a bee.[3] As illustrating the points of affinity between these witch metamorphoses and ancient religions, it is notable that in the Ephesian religion, the goddess was the queen bee. Her image had only the faintest resemblance to the human form. It had the outline of the body of a bee.[4]

Of the Aberdeen witches, Ellen Gray found a temporary habitation in a dog, "a brown tyk."[5] The dog continued to a recent date to represent the mysterious. A Glenlivet man in much request as a farrier or veterinary surgeon, often saw in the Howe of Woodend in the shadow of the Buiternach a mysterious big black dog which could not be got rid of.[6] It is a question whether this dog was a witch or the devil himself.

A horse or staig was another form on occasion tenanted by the witch. The last person to be executed for witchcraft in Scotland had, according to popular belief, turned her daughter into a pony and got the devil to shoe it.[7] But even a century later, the

[1] Cramond, Church of Alves, 29.
[2] County Folk-Lore, III, 51 (O. and S.).
[3] Cramond, Records of Kirk Session of Elgin, 39.
[4] W. M. Ramsay, H.D.B., V, 116*b* f.
[5] Sp. Misc., I, 127.
[6] Calder, Glenlivet Gleanings, 11.
[7] See p. 283.

belief persisted. Geordie Gall, a Glenlivet man, had occasionally to cross the hill by the Quern to Kirkmichael. One evening he was waylaid by a foal, "a duddie foal," which capered about him, and hindered his progress. He struck it with a stick, but that did not clear it from his path. Accordingly he consulted the famous Strathdown warlock, Willox McGregor. By his advice, on the occasion of their next meeting, he shot at the foalie with a gun in which he had inserted a crooked sixpence. Soon it became known that an old woman, who lived in a cottage near by, was confined to her bed, with a nasty wound in her breast.[1] Down to the middle of the nineteenth century, belief in these theriomorphic changes was widely held in the North-East. On a lonely moorland track, in the darkness of the night, a stray dog or sheep or horse worked on the fears of the wayfarer, and remembering the eerie stories he had learned in childhood, he was certain that this was no ordinary four-footed animal, but a creature of mystery that encased within its hairy or woolly coat a wandering witch that might do him a deadly hurt.

The transformation of the witches into animal form so often referred to in their trials, was a ritual and not an actual change. A formula was repeated; an ointment might be used: the witch now became to herself and associates a hare, a cat, a crow or whatever semblance she had chosen. Isobel Gowdie gave the following incantation, by repeating which thrice, a witch became a hare:—

> I sall goe intill ane haire,
> With sorrow, and sych, and meikle care:
> And I sall goe in the Divellis nam,
> Ay whill I com hom [againe !].

Instantly the witch felt she was a hare. When she wished to resume her human character, she would repeat:—

> Hair, hair, God send thé cair;
> I am in an hairis liknes now,
> Bot I sall be an woman ewin now.

When it was desired to go into the likeness of a cat, the following was repeated thrice:—

[1] Calder, *op. cit.*, 19.

I sall goe [in till ane catt]
[With sorrow and sych and a blak] thot!
And I sall goe in the Divellis nam,
Ay quhill I com hom again![1]

A similar form of words is given for the crow transformation. The witch, after repeating the charm three times, would feel her affinity with the animal into whose form she was ritually changed. Probably she would imitate, within limits, its methods of movement or other peculiarity; or in other ways show to the eyes of her sisters some distinctive mark of the creature she represented. The common people, however, had no doubt in their minds about the reality of these metamorphoses. They had seen the mysterious hare. They had shot at it. It had defied their best marksmen. But when once it had been hit by a specially loaded gun, they found an old woman of weird character, lying in bed, that self-same day, injured in the very part of the body where the hare had been struck.[2]

2. Times.

The large Conventions or Sabbats were attended by the witches of several covens drawn from a wide area. In the great days, these were held every quarter. Isobel Gowdie witnesses "a Grand meeting would be about the end of ilk quarter."[3] The great Sabbats of the Forfarshire witches were held four times a year at Candlemas, Roodday, Lammas, and Halloween. These were probably the dates of the great meetings of the witches throughout the world; but in different parts, one season came to be favoured more than another. In the Aberdeen area, Roodday and All Halloweve witnessed the great Conventions. Christen Mitchell, with other witches, convened upon the Roodday early in the morning upon Saint Katherine's Hill at the head of Androw Gawis close.[4] This was probably the Roodday in May, the 3rd of May, but there was the later Roodday, on 25th September (14th O. and S.). This was the date of another convention, for Andro Man confesses to

[1] Pitcairn, Criminal Trials, III, 607, 608.

[2] For these animal transformations, cf. Tylor, Primitive Cult, I, 279; Andrew Lang, Myth, Ritual, and Religion, I, 117 f.

[3] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 606.

[4] Sp. Misc., I, 165.

meeting in the Roodday in harvest at the Binhill and Binloch.[1] But in the popular mind, the Eve of May Day was the time when the witches were peculiarly active, and when man had to take special precautions to protect his home and gear from these nocturnal visitors. This fear would arise from the knowledge that the witches did assemble and hold high revelry at this period. The German and Norwegian witches gathered at the Blocksberg to keep their great Sabbat on Walpurgis Night.

Another season that witnessed great activity on the part of the witch sisterhood was Halloween. In the dittay against Thomas Leyis, stabler, it was stated that at Halloween, midnight, he, along with a great number of witches, came to the Mercat and Fish Cross of Aberdeen, under the guidance of the Devil, present with them, playing his kind of instruments.[2] The witch transformation at these conventions is brought out in the charge against Bessie Thom. She is accused of having, on Halloween at midnight, come to the Fish Cross of the Burgh under the conduct of Satan, her master, playing before her on his form of instruments, and there, accompanied by her devilish companions, transformed in other likenesses, some as hares, some as cats, some in other similitudes, they all danced about the Fish Cross, and the Meal-market for a long space.[3] The Halloween convention is referred to in the trial of the Banffshire wizard, Andro Man.[4] It was observed by the Deeside covens. Isobel Ritchie was indicted for being at the two devilish dances between Lumphanan and Craigleauch with Margaret Bane upon All Halloween, when she conferred with the devil.[5] Here two dances are mentioned. The assembly would last at least two nights and a day. Nine persons are reported as having been present at this meeting. It would be difficult to have a great muster at a lonely spot at this season of the year. It is safe to conclude that Halloween and Beltane were the periods of the great conventions of witches in the North-East, when the members of more than one coven would muster, as at the Aberdeen and Auldearn Sabbats, but in remote and sparsely populated districts, the assemblies would be on an attenuated scale.

As to the local Sabbats, the evidence is less definite, due probably to the fact that the dates of meeting were variable,

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 121.
[2] *Ibid.*, 167.
[3] *Ibid.*, 97.
[4] *Ibid.*, 121.
[5] *Ibid.*, 142.

depending on local circumstances. Marion Grant, widow of John Huchoun in Methlick, confessed that once every month since her initiation, the devil appeared to her, sometimes in a house, sometimes in the fields, in divers shapes, and likeness, sometimes in the shape of a beast, and sometimes in the shape of a man, and caused her to kiss him on divers parts and worship him on her knees as lord.[1] This plainly refers to an official meeting with the witch's master, but in itself is hardly sufficient to warrant us speaking of regular monthly meetings. The evidence from Orkney is more definite. Amongst the charges against Marable Couper in Birsay, it was stated, "Ye are with thame [i.e. her company] ewerie month anse."[2] It is very doubtful if they had regular weekly meetings in this period. The Auldearn witches, representing the craft in the zenith of its power, refer to the uncertainty of their time of meeting. "Efter that, we vold still meet, euerie ten, twelve, or twantie dayes continually."[3] Probably notice was given to the members of the local coven when a meeting would be held. This would depend on various factors. The opportunity of meeting in secret, the work which had to be undertaken, the commissions to be executed, all had to be taken into account in fixing the date of a local convention.

3. Places.

The place of meeting also varied. The larger Sabbats would usually meet at the same centre. Hills were of old the scenes of sacred rites, and provided a natural rendezvous. St. Katherine's Hill in Aberdeen saw the witches make merry at Beltane and Halloweve. Water and woodland glade seem to have attracted. Isobel Cockie forgathered with her associates at the Loch Burn and Castle Hill. The Binloch and the Binhill were the meeting places of the Banffshire covens with Christsonday and the Queen of Elphen. An initiation was designed to take place at Pol-nain in Strathaven, where there was a great convention of witches.[4] The Deeside coven held its great meetings between the Hill of Craigleauch and Lumphanan. The last meeting of the famous Auldearn coven of which Isobel Gowdie was a member took place at the hill of Earlseat, when they danced

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 171.
[2] County Folk-Lore, III (O. and S.), 60.
[3] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 617.
[4] Grant Stewart, *op. cit.*, 171.

with another coven.[1] The Knock of Alves is believed by some to have been the meeting-place of the Forres witches with Macbeth.[2] But solemn assemblages at the midnight hour were frequently held in a church or churchyard. The Kirks of Nairn and Auldearn housed notable gatherings of the infernal crew.

4. Ceremonial.

After the roll was called, new recruits were initiated into the society. A service was held. Homage was offered to the devil. At Pol-nain the witches made "a profound obeisance to a large black, ugly tyke, perched on a lofty rock, who was no doubt the 'muckle thief' himself."[3] Usually the homage was rendered by kissing the devil on any part he might indicate. The osculum infame was not confined to the rite of admission. It also took place at the Sabbat. Marion Grant admitted that he "causit the kis him in dyvers pairtis and worship him on thy kneis as thy lord."[4] Andro Man of Rathven bore witness that all who convened at the Binhill and Binloch kissed Christsonday and the Queen of Elphen.[5] He says elsewhere that at the conventions of witches there rises a black beast among them, and waxes great, and the witches kiss the beast's hinderpart. Jonet Lucas bears the same testimony.[6] Isobel Gowdie says the devil at the meeting of the covens would "sometime be like a stirk, a bull, a deer, a roe or a dog, and have dealing with us, and he would hold up his tail till we would kiss" him.[7] This kissing of the devil's fundament as a token of homage is referred to in the witch trials of all nations. It is not distinctively Scottish.

The dances formed a great feature of the witch assemblies. At the meeting on the Roodday on St. Katherine's Hill, the Aberdeen witches all danced a "deuilische danse" riding upon trees, for a long time, while the devil played to them.[8] At Halloween, the same witches and sorcerers, "under the conduct of Sathan present than with you, playing on his forme of instrumentis befoir yow," all danced about the Fish Cross, and about the Mealmarket for a long space.[9] There were two principal

[1] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 603.
[2] Cameron, Highland Chapbook, 82.
[3] Grant Stewart, *op. cit.*, 175.
[4] Sp. Misc., I, 171.
[5] *Ibid.*, 121.
[6] *Ibid.*, 124, 149, 151.
[7] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 613.
[8] Sp. Misc., I, 165.
[9] *Ibid.*

dances, the Ring dance, and the Follow-my-leader dance. The ring dance usually took place round some object. Thomas Leyis with a great number of other witches " came to the Market and Fish Cross of Aberdeen, under the conduct and guidance of the devil present with you. all in company, playing before you on his kind of instruments, ye all danced about the said Cross, the said Thomas was foremost and led the ring." [1] These danced round the Cross. Margaret Og was charged with going to Craigleauch " on Halloween last, and there accompanied by thy own two daughters and certain others, ye all danced together about a great stone under the conduct of Satan, your master, a long space." [2] Here the stone was the centre round which they danced. In the dittay against Jonet Lucas, it is stated they were all " dancing in a ring." [3] In the ring dance there was a leader. Thomas Leyis is said to have acted this part. The name of the second dance shows that in it, too, there was a leader, who was usually one of the chief members of the society. Often the devil himself played this part. In the ring dance the second in command usually led.

A dance that seems to have become popular outside the witch society is referred to by Isobel Gowdie. She says, " Jean Martein is maiden to the coven that I am of ; and her nickname is ' over the dyke with it,' because the devil always takes the maiden in his hand next him, when we dance Gillatrypes, and when he would loup from . he and she will say ' ower the dyke with it.' " [4] A dance of this name appears in the church records, showing it had already become popular among the lower classes. This would not be at all unlikely, for after Satan had taught his piper to sing and play an obscene tune, in a couple of days it was heard from the lips of all the youths and damsels in the streets.[5] In the same way, the dance which the devil taught his coven seems to have had a considerable vogue among the lower orders of Morayshire. It offended the sensibilities of the good folks of Elgin, whose records speak of the lasciviousness of three servant lasses in dancing " ane dance callit the gillatrype, and singing a foul hieland sang." [6] The witch dance and song had become part of the heritage of the lower orders. This happened before it was

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 97 f. [2] *Ibid.*, 144. [3] *Ibid.*, 149.
[4] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 606. [5] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, 571.
[6] Cramond, Records of Kirk Session of Elgin, 24.

referred to at the trial of the Auldearn covens, but there is no reason to doubt its witch ancestry. It continued to be danced in the eighteenth century. It incurred ecclesiastical censure in Garmouth in March, 1731, when Margaret Hay of that village compeared before the Session of Speymouth and declared herself penitent "for her indecent practice in unseemly dances (Gillatryps) on the 26th December and also for what she said thereanent when last before the Session, that she would persist in the said practice." [1] She appears also to have convened a great number of young people "to unseemly and indecent dancing after a manner peculiar to Garmouth." This was evidently a lascivious dance with obscene postures, and may very well have descended from the witch assemblies by that time broken up. The witches left a foul heritage.

The music for the dance was probably provided by a pipe or chanter. In the records of the Aberdeen witches, it is described as an instrument. At the Craigleauch and Aberdeen Assemblies, on Halloween, the devil provided the music. Sometimes he was invisible to the company though they heard the melody. In the charge against Jonet Lucas, reference is made to the dance at the grey stone at the foot of Craigleauch Hill where the devil played melodiously upon an instrument, "albeit invisiblie to you." [2] He also furnished the music at the Roodday convention in St. Katherine's Hill.[3] Two favourite tunes of the devil at the Tranent meetings were

Kilt thy coat, Maggie,
And come thy way with me,

and

Hulie, the bed will fa.[4]

There seems to have been much rough play at these dances. Of Isobel Cockie, it is said, "becaws the Devill playit nocht so melodiouslie and weill as thow crewit, thou tuik his instrument out of his moutht, than tuik him on the chaftes therewith and plaid thiself thereon to the haill cumpanie." [5] Isobel felt quite equal to remonstrating, in this rather forcible fashion, with the

[1] Cramond, Church of Speymouth, 43.
[2] Sp. Misc., I, 102, 149. [3] *Ibid.*, 165.
[4] The Spottiswoode Miscellany, II, 68 (Edin., 1845).
[5] Sp. Misc., I, 115.

Grand Master. Manners and methods were rough at the witch Sabbats. Thomas Leyis "dang" Kathren Mitchell, because she spoiled the dance, and ran not so fast about as the others.[1] Great activity was a mark of this dance. Though Cockie might chastise the devil, the position was usually reversed. The witches were severely handled by him, when they needed correction. Isobel Gowdie, speaking of her master, said, "Sometimes among ourselves we would be calling him 'Black John' or the like, and he would know it and hear us well enough, and he even then would come to us and say, 'I know well enough what you are saying about me,' and then he would beat and buffet us very sore. We would be beaten, if we were absent any time, or neglect anything that would be appointed to be done. Alexander Elder in Earlseat would be very often beaten. He is but soft and could never defend himself in the least but greit and cry when he would be scourging him. But Margaret Wilson in Auldearn would defend herself finely and cast up her hands to ward off his strokes, and Bessie Wilson would speak crusty with her tongue, and would be belling again to him stoutly. He would be beating and scourging us all up and down with cords, and other sharp scourges, like naked ghosts, and we would be still crying 'Pity! Pity! Mercy, our Lord!' But he would have neither pity nor mercy. When he would be angry with us, he would girn at us like a dog as if he would swallow us up."[2] It is hardly an attractive picture of domestic felicity. Taking this testimony along with Cockie's, it would appear as if the discipline, such as it was, only added to the wildness of the night's revels.

5. The Feast.

The ceremonial closed with a banquet which to the witches' eyes seemed a sumptuous repast. Much would depend on the provision the devil was able to make for his guests. If he were wealthy and powerful, as sometimes happened, there would be many dainties, but when provided by themselves, the fare might be plain and scanty. Isobel Gowdie says, "We killed an ox in Burgie about the dawning of the day, and we brought the ox with us home to Auldearn, and did eat all amongst us in a house in Auldearn and feasted on it."[3] The story of this feast

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 97 f. [2] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 613.
[3] Pitcairn, *ibid.*

would leak out amongst the inhabitants. The loss of the ox would deepen the impression that their cattle were not safe, for the accursed gang was carrying on its deadly work by night. Again Gowdie testifies, " We would go to several houses in the night time. We were at Candlemas last in Grangehill, where we got meat and drink enough. The devil sat at the head of the table, and all the coven about. That night he desired Alexander Elder in Earlseat to say the grace before meat, which he did and is thus :—

> We eat this meat in the Devillis nam,
> With sorrow and sych and meikle shame :
> We sall destroy hows and hald :
> Both sheep and noat intill the fald.
> Litle good sall come to the fore
> Of all the rest of the litle store !

and then we began to eat, and when we had ended eating, we looked steadfastly to the Divell, and bowing ourselves to him, we said to the Divell,

> We thank thé owr Lord for this." [1]

It was a grotesque, blasphemous cult.

At these meetings, besides dancing and festivity, there was a certain amount of business transacted and instruction given. The witches reported to the devil the mischief they had done since last assembled. They received fresh instructions, and at the meetings often practised the black art. An image of an enemy to be destroyed [2] was formed. Incantations were pronounced. The devil also supplied them with materials for executing their craft.

A candle or torch was often carried at the witch rites. Marion Grant at Aberdeen admitted that " the devil appeared to thee within these eighteen days or thereby, whom thou callst thy god, about one hour in the night . . . with a white candle in his hand." [3] The candle became a fir torch in a district where candles were scarce and not so suitable for the purpose in hand. The witches of Strathdown went to Pol-nain and there they continued, " steering themselves to and fro in their riddles, by means of their oars, the brooms, hallooing and skirling worse

[1] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 612.
[2] See pp. 198 ff.
[3] Sp. Misc., I, 172.

than the bogles and each holding in her left hand a torch of fir." [1] The lighted torches would help to strike terror into the heart of any wanderer abroad at the midnight hour.

The "carnal deal" was the concluding rite. In the dittay against Jonet Lucas, the last count was "the deuill, your master, beand in liknes of ane beist, haid carnall (deall) with ilk ane of yow." Of Jonet Davidson, it is said, the devil "had deil with the in forme of ane beist," and the same charge is brought against Isobel Ogg.[2] The Auldearn witches make the same confession.[3]

[1] Grant Stewart, *op. cit.*, 75. [2] Sp. Misc., I, 149, 151 f.
[3] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 603, 611.

CHAPTER III.

WORKING WOE.

THERE were great inducements to the novice to give herself to the devil's service. Vast powers were promised, powers of blessing and powers of blighting. The decree of Innocent VIII, which brought the whole resources of the Church into action against the witches, says, " they blight the marriage bed, destroy the births of women, and the increase of cattle : they blast the corn on the ground, the grapes of the vineyard, the fruits of the trees, the grass and herbs of the field." According to their accusers, the witches of the North-East amply justified this characterisation. They caused disease and death—

1. *On Man.*—A fever or influenza is constantly mentioned in the Aberdeen trials, as induced by the witches' black arts. Jonet Wishart, wife of John Leyis, brought this malady upon a great number of persons, the mark of which was a high temperature, followed by a sense of extreme chilliness, " the one half of the day rossin in his body as if in an oven, with an unquenchable thirst, the other half of the day melting away with his body with an extraordinary cold sweat." [1] A woman is reported as " from her middle up burning as in a fiery furnace with an insatiable drought which she could not slock (i.e. quench), the other half day melting away with sweat, and from her middle down as cold as ice." [2] This fever seems to have claimed a host of victims. To the watchers by their bedside, it appeared a mysterious trouble. Ordinary remedies were of no avail. Then it was recalled that the deceased person had incurred the hostility of a witch. She was the indubitable cause of the fatal illness. Through envy, Jonet Wishart cast her witchcraft upon John Pyet, stabler, whereby he lay fast bedsick eighteen weeks, continually melting away like a white candle, the other half day burning as in a fiery oven,

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 85. [2] *Ibid.*, 88.

and never recovered till he died, of whom she was the murderer.[1] This form of illness is described in the trials as "ane speciall point of witchcraft."[2]

Paralysis was also regarded as due to the witch's spell. Helen Fraser, the Foveran witch, took away the strength of the left side and arm from Catherine Fetch, wife of William Davidson, in consequence of which infirmity she died.[3] Marjory Mutch of Esslemont, having discorded with Patrick Ironside in Tarnhill, promised instantly to do him an evil turn. Immediately, by her sorcery and devilish witchcraft, he became altogether cripple, lame, and impotent of his hand and side.[4] Paralysis in the popular mind, was another mysterious affliction. The only way of accounting for such a strange disablement was to attribute it to the witches and their evil spells. They were credited with being the cause of another inexplicable malady, "wodnes" or insanity. It was sometimes associated with the fever, which was also due to the magician's malevolent action. Thomas Small in Kintore was reduced to a state of insane fury by the arts of the Kintore witch. He was infected by her "with ane extraordinar and maist vehement furie, madnes, rage and wodnes." He had to be bound hand and foot, and lay thus for ten days, eight or nine of his neighbours lying continually on his body to hold him down.[5] Small suffered also from the consuming fever, which no doubt accounted for his "wodnes," but both symptoms were believed to be due to the activities of the devilish sorceress, and only added to the fear and horror which she had already inspired.

A mother in childbed was always in peril. Sometimes her foes were the fairies, sometimes the witches. They might prevent delivery. Among the charges against Jonet Wishart is one to that effect. The wife of David Hutcheon, gardener, then dwelling in Fyvie Wells, called Jonet a witch, to which she replied she would prove some witchcraft upon her. Thereafter the gardener's wife took an extraordinary and unnatural sickness, being great with child, and the time of her reckoning being 20 days by gone. Being waited upon by the cummer night and day, she could never be loosed of her bands till she sent for Jonet and asked her forgiveness. Then the witch took her in her arms,

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 88. [2] *Ibid.*, 90. [3] *Ibid.*, 107.
[4] *Ibid.*, 133. [5] *Ibid.*, 111.

clasped her about the middle, and immediately, betwixt her hands, she was delivered of a dead bairn.[1] A danger that beset the mother after the child was born was that her milk might be abstracted. At Inveravon, in 1643, Margaret Walker appeared before the Session and lodged a complaint against Allaster M'Craw's wife for slandering her. M'Craw's wife had asserted that Walker had taken away her milk by going between her and the sun.[2] The fairies' motive for stealing the milk of the new-made mother was believed to be fondness for this milk. The witch's motive was construed as the desire to injure mother and child.

The most serious count of all in the charges against the witch crew was that they inflicted death upon their hapless victims. Two lads came under the ban of Jonet Wishart and " throw thi witchcraft cassin on tham, they ran and drowned themselves, and thereby thou, as thou promised, murdered them." [3] Isobel Cockie is charged with the death of Cristane Leslie who found " ane clew of all hewis," and threw it into the fire. There was a great crack and within twenty days, Cristane was dead.[4] Bessie Thom, the Aberdeen witch, was notorious as a poisoner. By giving her husband a potion, or by some other deadly spell, she accomplished his death. At the request of Elspet Jak, she made a quantity of " slaik " for her. Jak gave the slaik to her husband, who died from its effects. Slaik, however, might be employed as a curative agent.[5] Bessie Thom further bargained with Isobel Irving to rid her of her husband on consideration of a payment of 40s. " and a new mease of beiff." [6] Plainly this witch was a menace to husbands who did not live happily with their wives.

Besides interfering with man's physical well-being, the witches were notorious for trafficking in the affections. In this respect, Helen Fraser of Foveran bore a particularly bad character. She was accused of enticing Gilbert Davidson, son to William Davidson, Lytoun of Menie " to luiff and marie " Margaret Strachan directly against the will of her parents, to the utter wreck of the said Gilbert.[7] A similar charge was made against

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 92.
[2] Dunnet, Invera'an, 101.
[3] Sp. Misc., I, 86.
[4] *Ibid.*, 112.
[5] See Appendix to Joseph Robertson's Book of Bon-Accord, 368.
[6] Sp. Misc., 166.
[7] *Ibid.*, 107.

Scudder (Isobel Strachan) who, by her witchcraft, caused George Barclay to marry "ane puire husse," whereat all men wondered, seeing he was a man so goodlike and rich and come of honest parents, and she "ane ugly harlot quyne," come of so base degree, who now had depaupered both.[1] Such a misplacing of their affections by Davidson and Barclay was quite inexplicable save on the ground of diabolic agency. The witch must have cast her cantrips. Her modus operandi is not declared here; but one method, and that a very ancient one, was by the use of pocula amatoria, love potions or philtres. In a book published in Peterhead a century ago, a prescription is given, the employment of which will make a man or woman love you. "Take the heart of a young dove, especially that of a turtle dove, and steep it in blood six hours. Have it curiously baked and dried, and as often as you have opportunity, mix it in his or her drink till he or she has taken the whole, by which time the partaker will feel the god of love very busy in his or her breast, and will take all occasions to show you a kindness."[2] By the magic art, the heart of the turtle dove thus imbibed will inspire the party who partakes of the draught with love to the giver. These love potions are to be found amongst many nations. In the Sagas, by oblivious philtres, lovers were made to forget their old love and take on with a new one.[3]

Not only did the witch intermeddle in the love affairs of the celibate, but even douce married folks were not always proof against her enchantments. By witchcraft, Helen Fraser abstracted the love of Andrew Tillideff of Ranistoune from his spouse, Isobel Cheyne, and made him love Margaret Neilson and "sa mychtely bewitchit him that he could nevir be reconseillit with his wyif or remove his effectioun fra the said harlot."[4] Another transfer of the affections was attributed to the same lady. A Newburgh man, who had been married but two years, went to sow corn at a farm on the Murihill of Foveran, where the husband had died. Through Helen's witchery, his affections were "violently and extraordinarily" drawn away to the widow.[5] When

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 178.

[2] Witchcraft Detected, 57; many other charms for this purpose are given on p. 60.

[3] Thorpe, Northern Mythology, I, 216.

[4] Sp. Misc., I, 108. [5] *Ibid.*, 109.

these things happen to-day, no poor wretch is made the scapegoat, but so universal was the belief that any unfortunate and seemingly inexplicable occurrence in the marriage state was due to demoniac agency, that the Romanists accused John Knox of being a wizard and so alluring the daughter of Lord Ochiltree to become his wife: "as is plainlie reportit in the countrey, be sorcerie and witchcraft did sua allure that puir gentilwoman that scho could not leve without him: whilk apperis to be of greit probabilitie, scho being ane damosil of nobil blude, and he ane auld decrepit creatur of maist bais degrie of onie that could be found in the countrey." [1]

At a later date in this matter of the affections, the witch recedes into the background. The charm she bestows in itself gives its owner power to win any maiden to his side. In the ballad Fause Sir John and May Colvin,

> Frae below his arm, he's pulled a charm
> And stuck it in her sleeve:
> And he has made her gang wi' him
> Without her parents' leave.[2]

Dr. Rorie thinks the charm would have been wet with sweat which was believed to have aphrodisiac action. He quotes Dr. Gregor's statement that among the Scottish peasantry two sweets stuck together with sweat were held to have power over any woman desired.[3]

Gipsies or wandering tinkers, to whom in later years were attributed many of the qualities of the sorcerers, were believed to possess a charm by which they could make any woman follow them, a belief shared by the peasantry of many European nations. In the ballad, Geordie Downie, the victim of his charm or charms, sings,

> Ance I was Charlie Pelvie's wife
> In the auld town o' Aberdeen O.
> But now I'm tinkler Downie's wife
> Wi' the pearlin' ower my een O.
>
> My bonny love, Joe, my dearie, you know
> My bonny love, Geordie Downie,
> I'll sell my horse and drink my sheen
> And follow Geordie Downie.[4]

[1] Nicol Burnes' Disputation, 143 f., quoted in notes of McCrie's Knox, 460.
[2] P. Buchan, Ballads of the North of Scotland, 42.
[3] Rorie, Caledonian Medical Journal, X (1917), 62 f.
[4] P. Buchan, *op. cit.*, 62.

A curious charm was the tempting cheese of Fyvie. Special virtue attached to cheese. It was employed in appeasing the fairies, but, to the modern mind, there is nothing romantic about cheese. Yet it has been known to prove effectual as a charm in winning the heart of one not of mortal race. According to a Welsh legend, a young farmer heard of the Lake Maiden rowing up and down in a golden boat, with a golden scull. He went to the Lake and was fascinated by her. Despairing of her responding to his love, he consulted a wise man, by whose advice he tempted her with the gifts of a large cheese and a loaf of bread. This he continued to do till New Year's eve, when he dropped seven loaves and his biggest and best cheese into the waters. The Lake Lady by and by came in a skiff and gracefully stepped ashore.[1] What gained the affections of this denizen of the waters, might be equally potent in the case of mortal, and so it proved at Fyvie. Donald M'Queen was servant to Baron Seaton of Fyvie, who fled to France after the 1715 rebellion, and died there. Donald returned to Fyvie with one of his master's best horses, and procured a love token, " the tempting cheese o' Fyvie." This had the effect of bewitching or casting the glamour over his mistress, Lizzie Menzie, the Lady of Fyvie.

O wae wat worth you, Donald M'Queen,
Alas ! that ever I saw thee :
The first love token ye gae me
Was the tempting cheese o' Fyvie.[2]
O wae be to the tempting cheese,
The tempting cheese o' Fyvie
Gart me forsake my ain gudeman
And follow a footman laddie.[3]

This is the same belief as is found in the dittays against the witches, that of causing the transfer of the affections to an unlikely object. Such a *mésalliance* was so extraordinary that it must be due to the craft of the witch, operating either directly or by some charm upon the bewitched object. Scudder was accused of being a notorious marriage-maker. Her usual advice to those seeking a partner in life was to sew a penny in a clout and hang it about the craig, and then touch the person

[1] Rhys, Celtic Folk-Lore, I, 17 f.

[2] According to Dr. Rorie, this is a local variant of " the tempting cheese of Faery " (Caledonian Medical Journal. X. 63).

[3] P. Buchan, Ballads, 307.

they desired to marry.[1] On one occasion, she came to Elspet Mutray in Wodheid, a widow, and asked the loan of a penny. She took it and bent it, then got a clout and a piece of red wax. She sewed up the clout, with the wax and crooked penny inside. She gave this to Elspet, bidding her hang it about her craig, and when she saw the man she loved best, take the charm and strike his face therewith. Then she would attain marriage with the object of her affections. Whether it was that Elspet had had enough of the marriage state, or that she disbelieved in Scudder's charm, it is difficult to say. But she took the clout and cast it into the fire, and so great was the blaze that it almost consumed the house.[2]

It was regarded as a sign of the black art if a man could make dogs follow him. In 1664, Stephen Davidson in Pitmachie, Oyne, is reputed as well known to be guilty of witchcraft in causing dogs to follow him.[3]

2. *Herds and Flocks.*—From the earliest times, the sorcerer wrought havoc amongst herds and flocks. As early as the fifth century B.C., statutes were passed in Rome against those who sought to injure crops and vines and to spread sickness among sheep and cattle.[4] In the witch trials in the North of Scotland, it appears that even the poultry suffered at the hands of the traffickers in the black art. A woman said Maggie Baxter had too many fowls. Ere she left the house, the whole twelve fell dead off the roost at her feet. This would be due to the evil eye. Margaret Davidson in Banff was accused by Andrew Aitkenhead of injuring his health and causing his cat and dog to run "wode."[5] Wodnes was a common malady amongst animals. It was believed to be caused by the witches. Cattle and horses were the usual victims. On account of a grudge she bore him, Marjory Mutch bewitched the oxen of William Smith in Tarserhill while ploughing. She caused them all to "run wod, brak the pleuche: tua thereof ran over the hills to Deir and wther tua thereof wps Ithan side quhilk culd newer be tane nor apprehendit agane."[6] Helen Rogie was accused of the same crime. By her witchcraft she made the oxen of George

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 179. [2] *Ibid.*, 180.
[3] Oyne Session Records, quoted by Laing in Donean Tourist, 302.
[4] Cf. Livy, iv, 50; xxv, 1; xxxix, 16.
[5] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 143. [6] Sp. Misc., I, 131.

Forbes in Findrack run "wod," and within five or six weeks, seven of them died.[1] This disease was known in Caithness and Sutherland as the "heastie," because it killed its victims suddenly. Flocks might also be attacked. By the spell of Jonet Leask, sheep "ran furious and wod, that na man durst come nar quhair thay war, and strak baithe man and beist they micht ouirtak to the ground, contenvallie quhill they all deid."[2] Frequently a canny woman bewitched an animal she wished to buy. Having secured it at her own price, she restored it to health. It was proved against Jonet Wishart that she came to Andrew Williamson's in the Green and saw there a "fed mairt" standing, which she desired to purchase. From the moment she set her eyes upon the ox, it "ran wode" and none dare approach it, so that its owner was glad to sell at the price offered. When the bargain was completed, the beast became "weel eneuch," as soon as Jonet had laid her hands upon it.

The witch was everywhere noted for her power of abstracting the milk of her neighbours' cows, even though the byre doors should be locked. There were various modes of accomplishing this. Often the witch changed herself into the form of a hare, and thus milked the cow. In this guise, Helen Fraser was believed to have "souckit a milk kow" belonging to William Findlay at the Mill of Newburgh, whose house was on the opposite side of the burn from Fraser's.[3] At times, on opening the byre door in the morning, a hare was found mounted on the cow's back, sitting contentedly drawing the milk. The witch in the neighbourhood, though she had no cow or her cow should be "ferra," never lacked a plentiful supply.[4] On the other hand, the witch, without any transformation, might achieve her purpose through the agency of a hair rope, made from a hair from the tail of every cow within reach. The witch tugged at the hair rope as if it had been the cow, while she muttered her incantations. The following or similar words were sometimes employed :—

Mear's milk and deer's milk,
And every beast that bears milk,
Atween St. Johnston and Dundee
Come a' to me, come a' to me.[5]

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 146.
[2] *Ibid.*, 135.
[3] *Ibid.*, 107.
[4] Gregor, Notes, 189.
[5] Chambers, Popular Rhymes, 34.

In North Germany, the witch employed a broomstick stuck into the wall of her neighbour's cow-house. On this the pail was hung. She milked the broomstick, as if it had been an udder.[1] In the North of Scotland, the couple leg often took the place of the broomstick. Mr. Yeats, writing in 1886, said he knew a man in Glenbuchat, who affirmed that when he was a lad he went into a house inhabited by a solitary old woman, and saw a basin sitting on a table into which the milk was playing from the couple leg. But that was not the most wonderful avenue by which the milk might come. For the same writer adds that he knew a man belonging to Ordiquhill who died less than ten years previously, who affirmed he once watched an old woman milking a berry bush in her kailyard.[2] This looks like something new in witchcraft. Both instances bear witness to the belief, firmly held less than a century ago in the upland parts of the Northern Counties, that the witch by her magic arts did abstract a cow's milk. Some seventy years ago, there was a croft in the Glen of Newmill, where the cow was always dry in the morning. A witch had drawn her milk during the night. Then some spirits braver (and more sceptical) than the rest kept watch, and solved the mystery. The " witch " was discovered. She proved to be a neighbour, an " honest " woman, who went to the byre and without any magic art milked the cow before its owner was stirring. Thus men's eyes began to be opened.

In the old days a witch, if offended, might bring a blight upon a cow, so that she ceased to yield her milk. Agnes Webster, in 1597, was convicted of going to a house when the goodwife was milking the cow. Asking milk, and being refused, she took away the milk from the cow by her devilish witchcraft and sorcery.[3] Among the charges against Andro Man was that of claiming to take away a cow's milk when he pleased.[4] In 1655, John Young said of Isobel Ogilvie in Fordyce that she " suld tak away a cowes milk, and a quarter of a cow also, and consequently suld be a witch." [5]

A dittay, which contains reference to a strange custom, was brought against Thomas Leyis that he forbade giving aught of

[1] Thorpe, *op. cit.*, III, 78.
[2] Yeats, Banffshire Field Club, 1886, 64.
[3] Sp. Misc., I, 128. [4] *Ibid.*, 121.
[5] Cramond, Church of Fordyce, 19.

the first milk of the new calved cow to anyone except to his eldest sister, " quhilk is ane speciall poynt of witchcraft." [1]

3. *Reistin*.—Another attribute of the witch was the power of " reistin " man or beast. A story is told of an old laird of Castle Burgie, near Forres, who discovered that his daughter possessed this gift. " Father," said the girl, looking from the mansion house, " I could stop all these ploughs." The father thought she was jesting, and bade her give a display of her powers. She raised her hand, and uttered some magical words. All the ploughs stopped, except one, the oxen drawing which had concealed about them a small piece of rowan tree. The father, in alarm, asked who taught her this art. She replied that it was an old nurse. The father sent for a surgeon who bled the daughter to death, while the old hag was burned in a bonfire before the Castle.[2] Different versions of this story are to be found. A similar tale was current in Denmark. It concerned a priest and his half-grown daughter. She " reistit " all the ploughs save one, over which she had no control. Attached to it was a piece of rowan. On reaching home, the father inquired if she had any further skill. She said she could milk her neighbours' cows, and when asked to do so, struck two awls into the wall and began to tug at them. On being asked who taught her, she said that it was her mother. The priest's wife was then burned as a witch, but the daughter, being an only child, was spared.[3] In one of the versions of the Scottish legend, too, the mother was the instructor.

A nobleman in the vicinity of Banff, said to be James, Earl of Fife, was one day driving in his carriage, when his horses became restive and then stood stock still. No lashing or coaxing would make them move. They had been " reistit." Lily Grant, the wise woman of Whitehills was summoned in all haste. She came and was taken into the carriage beside his Lordship. The arrestment was removed and the horses went on in their usual style.[4] Some of the old lairds would have been under no necessity to invoke a witch's aid. Many of them were versed in the black art, having learned it in Italy. Such a man was the

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 101.
[2] Grant Stewart, *op. cit.*, 210 ff.
[3] Craigie, Scandinavian Folk-Lore, 378 f.
[4] Cf. Gregor, Notes, 32 ; Yeats, Banffshire Field Club, 1886, p. 65.

wizard laird of Skene, who "reistit" a country chiel who had offended him—

> An' there he stood as firm's a rock
> For a' that they could dee,
> Till Skene cam bye an' spak a word
> Which set the ploughman free.[1]

Not only could the witch "reist" men and animals, but her power in this respect extended to the inanimate creation. About 1650, the church bell of Kiltearn was "reistit." It absolutely refused to toll, though there was no visible stop.[2] A miller might "reist" his mill, presumably by the miller's word, which had much in common with the witch's art. A marriage might be reistit. A girl in Aberdeenshire had two lovers. On the wedding day the procession passed a field where the disappointed swain was ploughing. He left the plough and went to the house where the service was beginning. The service stopped. The bride swooned. The bridegroom, with great presence of mind, snatched a knife and fork (which every guest carried) and crossed them on her breast. The spell was broken. The bride revived. The service was performed without any further hitch. The young man who tried to stop the marriage returned to the field and said to a comrade: "These folks yonder are as clever as I am. I have been outwitted."[3] More wonderful still was the power of reistin not only the living but the dead who continue to frequent their earthly haunts. There is the tale of a Danish ghost who, when laid, is regularly secured by driving in a stake. When this decays or is pulled up, the ghost is freed again.[4]

In later times, when the great assemblies of the witches had ceased to meet, the power of reistin could be acquired by going to the churchyard at midnight and removing one of the lid screws from a coffin. This screw, screwed into a human or animal footprint "the wrang wye," i.e., against the course of the sun, accompanied by the repetition of the Lord's Prayer backwards, secured the desired object. Again, a knife inserted in the footprint by a real witch or wizard was effectual. There could be no stirring from the spot till the spell was removed.[5] This

[1] Mackay, The Wizard Laird of Skene.
[2] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, 269, quoting Wodrow.
[3] Laing, Superstition, 55. [4] Craigie. *op. cit.*, 314, 443.
[5] Cf. Gregor, Banffshire Field Club, 1890, p. 59.

reistin is derived from the magic practised by savage peoples. Their wise men, by magic, arrest a person on the spot where he stands, and render him incapable of moving from the place.[1] Another aspect of the reistin is shown in the story of the laird of Skene's treatment of a company of dancers who disturbed his slumber at an inn where he passed the night. Before leaving in the morning he reistit or bewitched them, so that they had to go on dancing without a stop. When they had continued to trip the floor for two nights and days, a messenger was dispatched after the laird, who bade them go to the bed which he had occupied. There they would find a pin stuck in a hole. When the pin was removed the dancers would be disenchanted.[2]

> " Gang hame," said Skene, " in yon box bed,
> Leuk for a muckle preen,
> And when ye draw it frae the wa'
> The dancing will be deen." [3]

4. *Depauperation.*—The cumulative effect of the witch's working woe upon a man's bestial was his impoverishment and " depaupering." Marjory Mutch bewitched Alexander Willicok's " hail guidis and gear," and thus reduced him to abject poverty. " His hail bestial deit, his haill guidis and geir wraket and consowmit and himself reducit." Hitherto he had been a man of great substance and riches, but Marjory's cantrips within his stable, byres, and chalmers, had brought him to penury.[4] Isobel Cockie by her curse ruined Alexander Chalmers in Kintore. He had nine score of old sheep, cattle and other bestial, but in a short time " all traikit, decayit, and deitt." Through Cockie's witchcraft cast on his gear, he was reduced to extreme poverty.[5] The same count is laid to the charge of the Elgin wizard, John Rhind. By his sorcery, Thomas Gray became sick and swelled. His horse shortly afterwards swelled and died. His mare broke out in boils and died. Another horse died. Ever since he came under Rhind's spells, he and his family had been ailing and his whole means gone.[6] Truly the witches had incurred a terrible guilt.

[1] Thorpe, *op. cit.*, I, 218.
[2] *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 1st February, 1918.
[3] Mackay, Wizard Laird of Skene.
[4] Sp. Misc., I, 132. [5] *Ibid.*, 112.
[6] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 296.

5. *Taking away the substance or fusion* was another method by which the traffickers in the black art sought to injure their fellows. They left the outer semblance, but abstracted the substance. All virtue had departed from the produce. It now provided no sustenance. Milk was one of the products thus attacked by the witches. Isobel Cockie bewitched Katherine Clerk's dairy and cattle, so that her " ky continualie to this day yieldit onle furth of thair paps thik cwrnes of milnn . . . lyk wenem and worsum." She could get no milk nor butter nor cheese.[1] Isobel further laid her hand upon her neighbour Andro Baxter's cow, which thereafter gave no kind of milk, but sometimes water, sometimes blood.[2] Even the herds of those in high place were not exempt from the witch's incantations. Helen Gray in Slains was found guilty of taking the " haill substance of the mylk, of my lordis ky and youis, that quhen the same was milkit, it wrocht our the lumes [i.e. vessels] lyk new aill." When thrown out, the very dogs refused to touch it.[3] As late as 1826 a woman at Dingwall was accused of taking away the substance of the milk by means of a charm called in Gaelic " torradh." [4] The witch also abstracted the substance from ale. Isobel Gowdie relates how this was accomplished. " When we take away the strength of any person's ale, we take a little quantity out of each barrel or stand of ale, and put it in a stoup in the devil's name, and in his name, with our own hands, put it among another's ale, and give her the strength and substance and heall of her neighbour's ale." [5] Two things are noteworthy here. The usual magic principle is followed of getting hold of part of the thing to be enchanted. Working the spell upon the part, the whole is affected. The second point is the substance is not destroyed; it is only transferred to a neighbour's brew which should now be more potent.

The witches also claimed to abstract the fusion of fishes. Gowdie is again our informant: " And when we took the fruit of the fishes from the fishers, we went to the shore, before the boat would come to it, and we would say on the sea-shore, three times over :—

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 111. [2] *Ibid.*, 113.
[3] *Ibid.*, 126. [4] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, 263.
[5] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 605.

The fishers are gone to the sea,
And they will bring home fish to me,
They will bring them home intill the boat
But they shall get of them the smaller sort.

So we either steal a fish or buy a fish or get a fish from them (for nought) one or more, and with that, we have all the fruit of the whole fishes in the boat: and the fishes that the fishermen themselves will have, will be but froth." [1] Even from this description, one may infer that the abstraction was but a ritual abstraction and make-believe.

The witches often tampered with the corn, sometimes when it was growing, sometimes after it was threshed. Gowdie gives the formula. "When we take away the fruit of the corn at Lammas, we take a wool shears, and cut or clip only three stalks of it and plait other three reeds and say:—

We cut this corn in our lord, the devil's name,
And we shall have the fruit of it hame.

And this thrice over, and so we have the fruit of that field. Even so, we take kail or the like." [2] This was a ceremony which the witches performed at Lammas before the corn was ripe. It accounts for the practice of the husbandmen at that season going round their fields with torches or clavies.[3]

In 1604 Elspet Cant, an Elgin witch, was challenged for injuring her neighbour's crops. By her witchcraft, "monie of all the heads of his corn were knotted together" and all his corn had "growne blak lyk zoung geis." [4] In 1644 Alexander Gray, in Grange, Banffshire, testified before the Presbytery of Strathbogie that he "wanted the fusion" of his corn; and that Patrick Malcolm, sorcerer, had said if his wife would give him a shirt, he would make him get the fusion again.[5] At Elgin, in 1651, David Tailor "wanted the schillak alias fussion" of his corn, two or three years on end. Janet Hossack said to his wife he wanted the substance of his corn.[6] Corn, the staple food of man, was a favourite object, by which a malevolent witch sought to hurt an enemy. An unusual rite is described by Gowdie. It

[1] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, 609. [2] *Ibid.*, 614. [3] See pp. 20 f.
[4] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 125.
[5] Presbytery Book of Strathbogie. 50.
[6] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 276.

was performed with the avowed purpose of producing barrenness. When the coven assembled at Kinloss, they yoked a plough drawn by frogs. The devil held the plough. Their officer drove it: the frogs pulled it. "And all we of the coven went constantly up and down with the plough, praying to the devil for the fruit of that land and that thistles and briars might grow there." [1]

Virtue might be taken away from any material. Colour might be abstracted. Gowdie said, "We took a thread of each colour of yarn that was in the said Alexander Cumming's dyeing-vat and did cast three knots of each thread in the devil's name, and thereby took the whole strength of the vat away, that it could dye nothing but only black, according to the colour of the devil in whose name we took away the right colours that were in the vat." [2]

6. *Raising Storms.*—The witches were believed, in virtue of their alliance with Satan, to have power over the elements. They could raise a storm or lay the wind at pleasure. A witch cat, thrown into the sea, raised such a tempest that James VI, returning from Oslo with his bride, had a narrow escape with his life. The wife of a sea captain, in an Aberdeenshire fishing village, had incurred the displeasure of a local witch. Her husband's boat was returning one stormy day after a long voyage and was on the point of crossing the bar, when the old hag appeared and passed to the point of the pier. She stood up, bowed down, then raised herself again, muttering some mysterious incantations. Then she stretched forth her arms, when lo! the ship sank with all on board.[3] That the devil was believed to be the Prince of the power of the air is shown in the Diary of Rev. John Mill, minister in Shetland from 1740 to 1803. There is no mention of an intermediary. This worthy divine was often heard talking aloud to his unseen foe. Once he was heard to say, "Well, let him do his worst: the wind aye in my face will not hurt me." This was his reply to Satan's threat that wherever Mill went, he would blow a wind in his teeth. The consequence was that the minister was unable ever to get a passage out of Shetland.[4]

7. *Cloddings.*—Stone throwings and cloddings have much in common. The witches openly cast stones. The cloddings took place by the instrumentality of an unseen agent, usually supposed

[1] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, 603.
[2] *Ibid.*, 605 f.
[3] Reid, Lowland Legends, 19 f.
[4] Mill's Diary, p. xxix.

to be in league with Satan. Isobel Barron was accused of coming on the Roodday before sunrise to the Nethermill Burn of the Burgh. She had gathered a great quantity of stones in her lap and cast part of them before her in the said burn, and another part over her shoulder into the same burn. She took three sups of water out of the burn in a dish and then spued it out of her mouth. Thereby, by her witchcraft, she stayed the water onrun directly to the mill.[1] This casting of stones had an evil end in view. By her action, she acquired power over the water in the mill lade.

The casting of stones was sometimes connected with the "cloddings" which revealed a certain power over inanimate nature. Sir Walter Scott relates the case of a country girl in Dunnottar parish who was remarkably quick at throwing stones, turf, and missiles. For long it was impossible to discover the source of the disturbances.[2] Poltergeist disturbances, fearful noises, the moving of furniture, are in many countries regarded as evidence of demoniac activity. In 1656 a report was made to the Session of Cullen, that a spirit had been going about Gilbert Imlach's house. Imlach's wife, Margaret Philp, was a reputed witch. Both being cited, said the spirit did cast clods, and spake some words to them. The Presbytery suspected that the cause of the disturbances was Philp.[3] A few years previously, a case of clodding from Grange parish was referred to the Presbytery of Strathbogie. Patrick Malcolm, a sorcerer, came to Alexander Christie's house and desired the serving woman to go with him. On her refusal, "the clodding and fearful trouble" began, and continued till the woman left the house.[4] At Banchory-Ternan, about the middle of last century, a clodding occurred which caused a great commotion. The story of the Deil of Baldarroch is still told by the firesides. One of the most notorious instances of the kind was furnished by Longside during last century. James Wylie tenanted one of the crofts in Braehead of Auchtydonald for a considerable period. He was a man held in high esteem by his neighbours. For six months some person or persons, believed to be in league with Satan, raised a great disturbance in his house by means of the black art, and til

[1] Sp. Misc., 1, 168. [2] Demonology, 379.
[3] Cramond, Church and Churchyard of Cullen, 128.
[4] Presbytery Book of Strathbogie, 49 ff.

his death continued to annoy Wylie. Neighbours sat with him at night, but as the clock struck twelve, fearful noises were heard all around them. Then a pail of water came capering along and emptied itself upon a woman watcher: the blankets uprose as of their own accord, and tumbled out on the floor. Chairs and tables danced everywhere through the house, crockery jumped about in the plate rack. One of the men, who came to spend a night with his afflicted neighbour, got a bad knock on the cheek from the potato chopper, two others were knocked down, one by a heavy blow from a peat, the other from a luggy cog, that came from beneath the table. Every movable thing in the house was in motion, especially the peat clods. Wylie was roughly handled in his bed. The disturbance only ceased as it drew to morning. New neighbours came, doctors, ministers, but all alike were exposed to the fury of the clodding. All left the house, fully convinced that the devil's agents were at work, and not till Wylie removed from the place was there peace. He died soon after.[1] A few years ago there occurred similar disturbances in a house in Gordon Street, Aberdeen. It seems as if these cloddings still await explanation. Of old they were believed to be due to the witch's power over nature, and her desire to bring trouble on some peaceful home. The witch has passed away. The cloddings still break out from time to time, attracting attention.

[1] Smith, Aberdeenshire, II, 934 f.

CHAPTER IV.

MEANS OF WORKING WOE.

THE means employed by the witch to injure mankind varied, but there were some well-recognised methods to which most of the sorcerers resorted from time to time in the exercise of their fell art.

1. *The Shadow.*—One method was to go between the sun and the party it was desired to hurt. By this means the witch's shadow fell upon her victim. Jonet Wishart, seeing Alexander Thomson, mariner, coming forth from Aberdeen to his ship, ran between him and Alexander Fidler's door under the Castle Hill, as quick it seemed as an arrow shot from a bow. She went between him and the sun and "thow keist the cantryps in his way."[1] The "cantryps" was her shadow. At Inveravon Kirk Session, in 1643, a complaint was lodged in a slander case. Mrs. M'Craw said Margaret Walker had taken away her milk by going betwixt her and the sun.[2] Amongst savage people this was a recognised method of bringing evil upon a man. "In Shoa, any obstinate disorder, for which no remedy is known, such as insanity, epilepsy, delirium, hysteria, and St. Vitus' dance is traced either to possession of a demon or to the shadow of an enemy which has fallen on the sufferer."[3] The black shadow of the witch falling upon a man cast a blight.

2. *Look.*—The evil eye was one of the witch's weapons in most frequent use. To the glance or look of the eye of malevolence, an extraordinary influence was attached. Like her other powers, it might be brought into operation, if anyone had offended the witch, or if her services had been purchased by one who thus sought revenge on his fellows. The possession of this gift was due to the devil's instruction. He taught Jonet Irving

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 85.
[2] Dunnet, Invera'an, 101.
[3] Frazer, Taboo, 83; cf. 78 ff., 89-96

" if she bure ill-will to onie bodie " to look on them " with open eyis and pray evill for thame in his name " and she would get her heart's desire.[1] Unbaptised children were in special danger from the evil eye. Till baptism, they were kept as much as possible in the room where they were born and carefully guarded. So Ross in Helenore :—

> Gryte was the care and tut'ry that was ta'en
> Baith night and day about the bonny weane.

Cattle were also liable to danger from the witch's look. If the witch had been angered or her favour purchased, the neighbours' flocks and herds soon began to pine away. As an Orkney woman milked her cow, another " lookit in ower the duir quhairvpoun the calf died presentlie and the kow fell seik that schoe wold neither eat nor yield milk." [2] The power of the evil eye was a useful endowment in a purchaser.[3] If a seller did not at once accept the offer, though much less than market value, the animal began to show signs of being overlooked and to dwine. Buyers with an " ill ee " were therefore dreaded. Fish were subject to the same baleful influence. Such as had the power " glowrt the fish oot o' the boat." [4] Poultry also suffered from exposure to the evil eye.

In regard to the method of exercising this power, it was not necessary for the witch to see the person or thing upon which she desired to work her spell. It was enough if she got hold of something belonging to the intended victim, a piece of clothing, a lock of hair, parings of the nail or such like. Hence parings of the nails, and cuttings of the hair were carefully swept and burned lest they came into a witch's possession. Any injury done to them affected their former owner, even though now they were physically separated. In the primitive mind the connection still continued. Amongst some African tribes on the Zambesi, the same precautions were taken. According to Dr. Livingstone " they carefully collect and afterwards burn or bury the hair lest any of it falls into the hands of a witch." [5] There was believed to be something peculiar in the look of the eye and the general attitude of a witch exercising this power. If a person

[1] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, 7.
[2] *Ibid.*, 5 (Trial of Christian Marwick).
[3] Cf. p. 181.
[4] Gregor, Notes, 184
[5] Napier, Folk-Lore, 40.

were watchful, he would see it was no ordinary glance. An Orkney witch, Katherine Grant, in 1623, "lukit our her shoulder, and turned up the quhyt of her eye."[1] Here there were two distinctive marks. Isobel Cockie "glowrit wp" to Alexander Anderson in Kintore. Immediately his speech left him, and he betook himself to bed.[2] It was no natural look, no ordinary glance of the eye. Margaret Clerk in Lumphanan was accused of the death of John Burnett. After he had ridden past her she "luikit back again towards him and cast up her hands, and mumbled some of her devilish prayers." He took to bed and died of her witchcraft.[3] Here there is both look and word or prayer. In another instance the evil eye was associated with touch. Katherine Clerk was heating a kirn of milk when Isobel Cockie came in. The milk, from the time she "luikit thairon and tuichit the cog," would no wise yirn.[4] Some misfortune had taken place. It was remembered the reputed witch was in the vicinity. The queer way she looked was now recalled, as also the strange words she spoke and actions she performed.

3. *The Word.*—The word was a potent instrument in the witch's mouth. She exercised her spell by means of prayers or curses. Cursing differed from swearing. The latter came under the category of profanity. Cursing was a much graver offence. It was the appointment of some one to wrath or misfortune. Usually, it took the form of a prayer, appointing a particular ill to befall, while the witch, at the same time, assumed a special attitude. Such imprecations were believed to possess a mysterious potency. They constituted a part of the witch's armoury which was often resorted to by the common folks, and frequently brought them into trouble with their ecclesiastical superiors. At Elgin, in 1663, Margaret Murray cursed Bessie Smith, who soon after died a terrible death.[5] The wishes expressed were often grotesque, sometimes gruesome. Margaret Denoon, in Fordyce, was convicted, in 1690, of saying "God reward them that was the cause of her flitting," and she prayed that God might cause them to be "turned seven years upon a tedder."[6] In 1729, Bessie Chisholm, in the same parish, was fined 20s. for wishing that some persons might fall and tumble nineteen times in

[1] Ferguson, Rambles, 32.
[2] *Ibid.*, 159.
[3] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 300.
[4] Sp. Misc., I, 114.
[4] *Ibid.*, 111.
[6] Cramond, Fordyce, 53.

the falling ill.[1] In 1725, at Rathven, evidence was given that Katherine Sympson prayed and wished that Janet Forbes might get a cold armful of her husband.[2] This was a common form of imprecation. William Reid, seaman, at the shore of Buckie, gave in a complaint against Isobel Geddes, servant, " for her horrid cursing of him and wishing that the devil might take him out of the boat from the rest of the crew and that his mother might get a cold arms full of him." [3] A vile " prayer " was that of Isobel Milne in Alves, who was charged with cursing Isobell Murray, spouse to John Russell in these terms : " I ask God and our dear Lady that the next child Isobell Murray shall bear to her husband be like a wedder," adding " she never asked ane asking from God but shee obtained it," and she was confident of obtaining that request too.[4] A very complete ritual for an effective curse was revealed in the charge against Helene A. Wallis in Orkney. She approached William Holland whose cattle pastured on a field about which there was a dispute. " She tore the curtch off her head : and put it under her belt, shook her hair about her ears, ran to the Lady Chapel hard by, and went thrice about it upon her bare knees, praying cursings and maledictions to light upon the said William : and thereafter came to his house, and went so about his fireside, and did the like, and thereafter coming forth where his cattle was pasturing, said these words :—

> Gleib wind look in the air of the lift
> And never have power to eat meat." [5]

It will be observed that there is a distinction in the form of these curses. Some are invocations of God or the devil that He will work woe on the individual appointed. Others are of the nature of a magic spell, working their deadly effect by their inherent magical power.

The usual posture was that of a suppliant on the bare knees. At Drumoak, in 1684, William Steven satisfied, for having on his knees prayed a malediction to John Duncan, his wife, children and bestial.[6] The petitioner was not on his bare knees, but his prayer was comprehensive. At Aberdeen, Jonet Wishart was

[1] Cramond, Fordyce, 58.
[2] Cramond, Rathven, 61.
[3] Cramond, Church of Rathven, 67.
[4] Cramond, Church of Alves, 35.
[5] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, 451 f.
[6] Henderson, Lower Deeside, 90.

adjudged guilty of using execrations and cursings against William Mar, junr., in sitting on her knees and praying, "let never sea nor salt water bear him."[1] At Urquhart, Marjorie Gray was convicted of cursing on her bare knees David Innes.[2] The nudity speaks of a savage history. At Grange, in 1714, Isobel Kelman, in New Crannoch, was reported to be a notorious curser, and "that she had sitten on her knees with her face to the sun," imprecating several parties who had called her witch.[3] The posture of face to the sun also appears in a Rathven case. In 1727 Marjory Wilson was delated for having, on the Lord's Day, cursed her son Patrick Simpson, with her face to the sun and wishing him sudden death, as befell him.[4] This face to the sun was not original. The witch crew went against the course of sun. Not only did one, who desired her curses to hit the mark, go down on her bare knees, but she also shook her hair loose.

Bessie Skebister in Orkney "sheuk her hair lous."[5] In cursing, this action inspired terror in the heart of the onlooker. It also meant that the demoniac power emanating from the witch was untrammelled by knots that might restrain its outgoing.[6] This was a very old law in magic ceremonial.

In many instances, there was exemplified the "malum minatum, et damnum secutum." A young man says to Margaret Clerk at the church door of Kincardine O'Neil, "Get fire to thee, witch carling." Back came the retort, "Thou shalt be drowned before I be brunt." Watering his horses in the Don, the lad was drowned, surely a clear proof that Margaret was a witch.[7]

4. *Touch.*—The witch might touch the object she desired to enchant. Contact proved the channel by which the witch's power was communicated to her victim. Marjory Mutch, falling out with Jonet Laing at the Mill of Esslemont, turned herself thrice backwards and touched Jonet with her hand, whereupon the latter immediately contracted a deadly sickness.[8] Isobel Cockie laid her hand upon Andro Baxter's cow. Thereafter she gave no kind of milk.[9] By the same power, the witchcraft might be

[1] Stuart, Aberdeen Burgh Records: Extracts from Council Register (Sp.), II. 228.
[2] Cramond, Urquhart, 51 f.
[3] Cramond, Grange, 27.
[4] Cramond, Rathven, 62.
[5] County Folk-Lore, III (O. and S.), 125.
[6] Cf. Frazer, Taboo, 310 f.
[7] Sp. Misc., I, 178.
[8] *Ibid.*, 133.
[9] *Ibid.*, 113.

removed. Of an ox which Jonet Wishart had bewitched, it was stated it became well, after she had again laid her hands upon it. In Orkney, a man sickened when Cirstane Leask spread her hand over his back. When this was repeated, the pain eased and he was healed.[1] By touch, evil was induced. By touch, it might be removed.

With touch, as with other means of casting a spell, it was sufficient to get into contact with any of the belongings of a person upon whom the witch desired to exercise her art. John Philp confessed to charming three women by taking plaits of their hair. Two of the women died.[2] The same method was employed in bewitching a man's stock. Touching one animal, the entire herd was affected. Isobel Cockie, meeting Thomas Ray, who was calling his oxen to the plough to yoke them, used no kind of salutation but touched one of the oxen. Whereat they all took an extreme trembling and the best of them died.[3] With poultry, the possession of a few feathers by the witch was sufficient to enable her to destroy the whole pen. Jonet Leask in Fortrieford went to see her sister who had three-score geese. She plucked three feathers off one of the geese, laid them on the loof of her hand and immediately thereafter, by her sorcery all the geese died.[4] The same principle operated in regard to the grain crops. Isobel Cockie met Alexander Anderson in Kintore bringing home the first load of his bere. "She drew ane acher [i.e. ear] furth of the load and said, this is noble geir" [i.e. stuff], after which by her witchcraft he got no profit of his whole crop, which rotted and wasted away.[5] Even if no witch were at hand, a man might become the victim of her art by contact with some bewitched instrument. The most likely spot for a witch to enchant was the door or threshold of the houses. If she wished to injure a man and his family, she realised that was the place with which they must come in daily contact. If the door were bewitched, the malady overtook the first person that passed through. Isobel Cockie came to Thomas Small's house and "keist her cantrypis betwixt his duiris." The said Thomas, rising first in the morning, her witchcraft fell on him. He contracted fever.[6] The wife of Alexander Harvey in Kintore

[1] County Folk-Lore, III (O. and S.), 87.
[2] Register of P.C., 2nd ser., IV, 637 f.
[3] Sp. Misc., I, 113.
[4] *Ibid.*, 135.
[5] *Ibid.*, 114.
[6] *Ibid.*, 111.

found Cockie stealing her peats. In revenge for being found out, she "keist her cantrypis in his house dur." Harvey, being the first to come to it, became speechless for 24 hours. He developed fever and was never well again.[1] Scudder directed her witchcraft against Alexander Cruickshank's doors. Fortunately his sow went out first. The enchantment fell upon it. It "ran wod" and so continued, till it died.[2] A custom that may be explained as due to fear of the enchanted door is that of carrying the bride across the threshold of her new home. For the same reason, a cat was sometimes thrown into the house before the young wife entered. A clue as to how the bewitching of the house door was performed may be found in the method adopted to enchant a byre door. Margaret Ogg, in Marywell, took her own "heidleas" and cut it in nine pieces, and then laid the same secretly under the earth under the byre door of William Ross in Bogloch. After this enchantment, ten or twelve of his cattle died.[3] Something belonging to the witch was buried under the threshold. Nine was a magic number, and a "heidleas" divided into nine parts would have special efficacy.

A witch might not only enchant a house door, but she might bewitch any article of clothing she was sure its owner would wear. In the dittay against Gilbert Fidlar in Auchmacoy, a major charge is that when he made a pair of double-soled shoes for the late Lady Errol, he inserted witchcraft in them. The consequence was that, after Fidlar had put the shoes on her Ladyship's feet, the self-same day she developed a grave illness, alleging she had contracted a deadly sickness in her feet and about her heart.[4] Her symptoms were those of the fever that claimed so many victims at that period. The witchcraft Fidlar inserted in the shoes would be of the same nature as that placed under the house door. It would consist of some trifle that belonged to the warlock.

A witch's belongings were always dangerous. Contact might mean death. Janet Davidson of Torphins was accused of causing a man's fatal illness. There had fallen from her husband's pocket a "writing." Patrick Hunter picked it up and showed it to those who could read. They said it contained lessons and instructions in "meir witchcraft." The result of Patrick's

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 112.
[2] *Ibid.*, 180.
[3] *Ibid.*, 143.
[4] *Ibid.*, 137.

connection with the book " by handling and uptaking the said letter," was that he contracted the influenza and died.[1]

5. *The Pictour.*—A mighty engine in the witch's hands was the " Pictour " or image. This was a rude representation of the person it was desired to injure. It was void of all artistry, or even sense of proportion. Usually about the size of the thumb, it consisted of two stumps for hands and arms and two for legs. There were holes for eyes and mouth. It bore but a faint resemblance to the human form. This was the usual type of image, but one of Archibald, Earl of Angus, was described as " ane bony small pictour of yallow walx." [2] The material of which it was formed might be clay, wax, lead, butter or even wood. It was usual for the witch or witches to give it a name—the name of the person it represented and who was to be the victim. Originally this was an important part of the ceremony. The ritual observed depended partly on the material of which the image was composed. Probably the clay figure, the corp creadha, was the most common in the North. While the clay was soft, pins were stuck into it with incantations. If it was desired to inflict a slow, lingering illness, the operators were careful to avoid inserting the pin in the part of the pictour, where the heart was supposed to be.

> Pictures oft she makes
> Of folk she hates, and gaur expire
> Wi' slow and racking pain, before the fire,
> Stuck fu' o' preens, the devilish picture melt
> The pain by folk they represent is felt.

The clay image was usually deposited in a running stream. As the action of the water gradually dissolved it, the person it represented slowly and painfully wasted away. The wax figure was kept beside the witch. As she inserted a pin she uttered an incantation and the victim was conscious of pains in the corresponding part of the body. The wax image would be placed beside the fire, slowly to dissolve, and as it melted away, the life of the person it was desired to injure gradually ebbed. Often there would be more than one witch engaged in these incantations. The image is referred to by King James VI. " He (Satan) teachest how to make pictures in waxe,

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 150.

[2] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, 388.

that by the rostinge thereof, the persons that they bear the name of may be continuallie dryed awai by continuall sicknesse."

A piece of wood was employed to work woe on the minister of Strathfillan.[1] Sometimes the image, wrapped in linen, was buried, as in the case of the young laird of Fowlis and young Lady Balnagowan. Here there was a perfect representation of death. Instead of pricking with pins or burning, the image might be shot at with elf darts. Sorcerers employing this method were known as Sagittarii or Ballistarii. Catherine Ross, Lady Fowlis, resorted to this means of injuring Lady Balnagowan. "These arrows were shot by the devil's agents: and when we shoot these arrows," says Gowdie, "we say

> I shoot yon man in the Devillis name,
> He sall not win heall hame:
> And this salbe alswa trw;
> Thair sall not be an bitt of him on lieiw [i.e. alive]."[2]

An unusual modification of the image rite was when, instead of forming a special figure out of some suitable material, a pillow was taken, and by the witch's incantations, made to represent the victim. Isobel Ritchie, one of the Aberdeen witches, was indicted in 1597 for taking two pillows within Thomas Forbes of Cloak's house, putting them on a balance and weighing them: "in thy inchanting manner appointed the one pillow to be the said Thomas, and the other Elspet Forbes, his daughter, and because the said Thomas his pillow was lightest, by thy witchcraft he died."[3] This was an uncommon development of the image. The man was weighed in the balance and found wanting. No pin, or fire or water was employed. The magic balance determined the issue.

The pictour was employed by the Aberdeen and Auldearn covens, and it has been resorted to by solitary individuals down to the threshold of the twentieth century.

There is a legendary story of an early use of the wax figure in connection with a mythical king of Scotland. King Duffus, about 968, was affected by a mysterious disease, which his physicians could not cure. In the popular mind it was ascribed to witchcraft. By and by, it was bruited abroad that a company of

[1] Campbell, Superstitions, 47 f.
[2] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 607. [3] Sp. Misc., I, 140.

hags at Forres were holding nightly meetings and practising their arts to take away the royal life. They were surprised while roasting the king's image, made of wax, upon a long spit over a slow fire, muttering their magic incantations and basting the figure with a poisonous brew. As the image wasted before the fire, the king's body broke forth in sweat; words of enchantment kept him from sleeping. The whole gang was seized and burned at Forres.[1] Whether there is any foundation for this story or not, the trials of the Aberdeen witches provide ample evidence that the pictour was a potent weapon in their hands. It is proved against Jonet Leask that she employed the wax figure. Seeing her former witchcraft was ineffectual, and did not take the life of her enemy as quickly as she desired, Jonet "at Lowrane last, made the picture of Walter Cruickshank in wax, within her own house at the Ford of Fortrie, and put it in a spit nightly from four o'clock in the afternoon till ten o'clock at night, turning the same at the fire, melting the same away, and as the wax melted, at that same time and hour his body melted by sweating. Daily, while his picture of wax melted, he took an extreme sweating with an extraordinary burning heat at his heart and liver like a fiery furnace with a schot [i.e. pain] in his side and an extreme drouth and vomiting till he died."[2] The method of the witch's working is detailed here. Another material of which the image might be formed is mentioned in the trial of Helen Rogie of Findrack. There the particulars are not given, only the general charge stated. When arrested, Helen had in her purse the pictour and image of a man, engraved in soft lead, which instrument of witchcraft she was charged with using in all her devilish sorceries. "By that form of pictour thou roasted sundry times the pictours of men whom thou murdered, rosting them at the fire in pictours of wax."[3] It seems as if the lead figure was a model and after its pattern Rogie made the wax pictours to represent those she wished to destroy. In 1613, in Aberdeen, Annabel Cadenhead was called by her sister a manifest witch. She had roasted Alexander Davidson's picture in her house a month, whereof he departed this life.[4] The practice

[1] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, 333 f.; cf. Hollinshed, History of Scotland, 206 ff. (Edin., 1577).

[2] Sp. Misc., I, 136. [3] *Ibid.*, 146.

[4] Stuart, Selections from Records, 81.

evidently still held its ground in the burgh. These instances seem to have been carried through by individual witches. The Auldearn trials lift the veil on what happened when a whole or part of a coven was present along with the devil. According to Isobel Gowdie, the words spoken when the pictour for destroying the laird of Park's male children was formed were these :—

> We put this water among this meall [i.e. mould or earth]
> For long dwining and ill heall.
> We put it in intill the fire
> To burn them up both stik and stour.
> That be burnt with our will
> As any stikill [i.e. stubble] on an kill.[1]

The devil taught them these words. When they had learned them, they all fell down upon their bare knees, with their hair about their eyes, and their hands lifted up. They looked steadfastly upon the devil, repeating the words thrice over, till the image was made. Then in the devil's name they put it on the fire. After it had shrivelled a little, and while red like a coal, they took it out in the devil's name. It was now hardened and ready for service. Though thrown over a kirk, it would not break. It was roasted every second day at the fire, and was turned about. The person it represented would be scorched and roasted as it roasted. It wanted no mark of all the parts of a child. It had little lips and its hands were folded down by its side. Five of the witches were present at the making of it, along with the devil, but all the members of all the covens got intimation of it at their next meeting.[2] In view of the social standing of the victims, the proceedings would assume a high importance. The clay for the image was carefully prepared. John Taylor brought it home in the corner of his plaid. His wife pounded it very small like meal and sifted it with a sieve. She then poured water over it in the devil's name.[3] This same wife, better known as Janet Breadheid, adds the following particulars in her confession: "Each day we would water it and then roast and bake it. We would turn it at the fire each other day till the bairn died. When that happened we laid aside the figure, and touched it not till the next bairn was born. Within six months of the second child's

[1] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 616. [2] *Ibid.*, 613. [3] *Ibid.*, 605.

birth, we took it out of the cradle in which it had been placed and the clout in which it had been wrapped. We would dip it now and then in water and bake and roast it at the fire in the same way as with the previous child." [1] The roasting and baking of the pictour affected the health of the child it represented. The same pictour was efficacious in dealing with more than one victim.

At this very period an effort was made to destroy the Pope by this same means. In 1663 a wax figure of Pope Urban stabbed through with a knife was slowly melted before the fire.[2] It was believed that attempts were made on the life of Louis XIII of France by the use of a wax image. The process was so simple; it involved so little danger to the would-be assassin that one cannot wonder it was widely employed. The marvel would be if such a weapon were to be lightly discarded by those who knew how to use it. It need, therefore, be no matter for surprise that in the uplands, in remote glens, and by river sides, almost to the closing years of the nineteenth century the image continued to be formed with the view of destroying an enemy. Even the capital of the Highlands discovers more than one pictour.

About the year 1750, the Rev. Mr. Fraser, minister of Killearnan in Ross-shire was much troubled by somnolency in the pulpit. His hearers thought him bewitched, an idea which he himself shared. Two women were fixed upon as the cause of his unnatural slumbers. It was believed they had made a clay image of the minister, and had stuck pins into it. Certain pains he felt were ascribed to this cause. No pictour was found, but its existence and use were the only explanation of the minister's illness that occurred to the enlightened of that age. Had it not been for the Act of 1736 repealing the penal laws against witchcraft, in all probability the two innocent women would have met a horrible death.[3]

While the ritual associated with the image was always performed in strict privacy, even in the great days of the witches' power, the fact that it was observed, till quite recent times, in many parts of the Highlands has been proved by the discovery of the clay image which had been employed as a weapon against some hated personality. The following account of such a find

[1] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 618. [2] Summers, Geography, 558.
[3] Sage, Memorabilia Domestica, 60.

is taken from a contemporary newspaper: "A curious instance of the survival of superstition was revealed on Monday at the Inverness police-court. An elderly Highland woman named Isabella Macrae or Stewart, residing at Muirton Street, Inverness, was charged with assaulting a little girl. . . . Towards the close of the case, great amusement was caused in court by the accused producing a clay image or corp creagh which she believed was made by a so-called witch. The legs had been broken off the image, and since then the prisoner believed that her own legs were losing their strength. A gentleman who wished to purchase the image after the accused had left the court was promptly told that on no account would she part with it, for if anything happened to it in this gentleman's possession, she might die and she was not prepared to die yet. She therefore wished to keep the image in safety, so long as it would hold together, for so long as the image lasted she believed its baleful influences upon her would be ineffectual. The image was about four inches in length: green worsted threads containing the diabolic charm were wound around, while pins were pierced through the part where the heart should be." [1] This poor woman, firmly believing in the efficacy of the charm, naturally wished to preserve the image when it had fallen into her own hands. She would keep it from all harm: none should approach it with pins, or try to break it. When it was safe, no danger would befall her. A different fate awaited another image which also came into the hands of the person represented. But in this case the recipient had no faith in its potency. This clay figure is now in the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford. It was discovered one morning in Glen Urquhart in the county of Inverness, not in a stream, but near the front door of the house of an army officer who was the intended victim. The workmen who found it were horrified by its presence and threw it away. The major, on learning of this design upon his life, took the revenge of carefully collecting the *disjecta membra* of this rude representation of himself and presenting it to the Museum.[2] It is curious how the old and new faiths meet in a case also from Inverness. An old woman took umbrage at her minister because he refused her admission to the Holy Communion. So she adopted the ancient method of having

[1] *Macclesfield Courier*, 22nd December, 1883.
[2] Rhys, Folk-Lore, III (1892), 385.

her revenge by making an image. Her pastor fell into bad health, gradually growing weaker. Then the image was discovered, the magic spell broken, and the divine rapidly recovered.[1] Somewhat similar was the action of the fishers at Prestonpans. It was their custom, as in many other sea towns, to set sail on the Sunday evening for the fishing grounds. A clergyman of the town prayed against their Sabbath breaking, and "to prevent any injury accruing from his prayers, the fishermen make a small image of rags and burn it on the top of their chimneys."[2] It was more likely that the original motive for the action of the fishermen was like that of the Inverness communicant—a desire to injure the minister who disapproved of their conduct. The clay figure was resorted to by the under dog. It was his weapon against those in authority. At Kirkhill, near Beauly, in 1870, a farmer dismissed a manservant, who, in revenge, made an image and buried it near the farmer's house, hoping that as the rains washed away the clay, his enemy would waste and die. The farmer turned sick, but, digging in his field, found the figure and recovered.[3] A clay figure was found in a burn near Golspie about 1890.[4] The last case of which we have knowledge comes from the far distant Hebrides. It brings us to the threshold of the twentieth century. Miss Sheila Macdonald, writing in 1903, says a case of the corp creadha "has been known to occur in Uist within the last five years, and in a parish adjoining ours, it was whispered that the death of a certain young man was due to a spell of this nature."[5]

In some of these instances, there is no suggestion that the practice of the clay figure was restricted to witches, but probably the knowledge of the black art was handed down in families, and so long as the magic arts are performed, so long will a wise woman be found who is the leader in the performance.

In attenuated form, the image has survived in the North of England and has been employed in that cause which is the last to adhere to the ancient ways. Love-sick swains and maidens, to whom new religions and philosophies offer no assistance in their perplexity, have appealed to the image. In various coun-

[1] Gordon Cumming, In Hebrides, 263 f.
[2] Choice Notes, 271.
[3] Gordon Cumming, *op. cit.*, 264. [4] Nicholson, Golspie, 82.
[5] Folk-Lore, XIV (1903), 373; Old World Survivals in Ross-shire.

ties in England a piece of candle and a pin are, or were, employed by serving maids to bring their sweethearts who have been slow to visit them. In Buckinghamshire, girls desirous of seeing their lovers used to stick two pins across the candle they were burning, taking care the pins passed through the wick. Probably the wick represented the heart. While pricking the candle the girls recited this verse :—

> It is not this candle alone I stick,
> But A.B.'s heart I mean to prick ;
> Whether he be asleep or awake,
> I'll have him come to me and speak.

By the time the candle had burned out, the lover was certain to show himself. He had suffered such agonies, he had to move. This was surely turning a weapon of destruction to a beneficent purpose ![1]

The modern representative of the pictour and its being consumed in the fire is the burning of a person in effigy.

The employment of the image is of great antiquity. It is found amongst all the great nations of the old world. It was known in Thebes. It was practised in Greece and Rome. It is found in Babylonia. The sorcerers amongst primitive peoples everywhere resort to it. The negroes of Barbadoes, some native tribes in India, the demon priests in Ceylon, all make use of this method of destroying their foes. In Europe there are survivals of the practice in Sweden and Finland.[2] The general features are identical with the Scottish usage. The custom springs from a low state in human development when the savage mind believed that what was done to a man's representation was done to the man himself. Whatever injury was inflicted upon the image was inflicted upon the person it represented. Sometimes a part of a man's hair or nails was worked into the figure. At the very least it got the victim's name. But the image itself belongs to the realm of homœopathic magic. As the image suffers so does the man, the idea being that things which resemble each other are the same.

The same principle of imitative magic led to an image or representation being made, not only of the witch's victim, but also

[1] Henderson, Folk-Lore, 173.
[2] Thorpe, Northern Mythology, II. 55.

of the agency of his destruction. This plan was adopted when the person it was desired to destroy was at sea. A representation was made of the ocean, and the vessel in which he was sailing. Then, when by the witch's magic art, the pictorial sea became troubled, and the symbolic barque overwhelmed, the like fate overtook the vessel and man it was desired to injure. French Kate was maid to the Laird of Abergeldie's wife. She told her lady that her lord was paying attention to strange women. The mistress, in consequence, asked the maid, for her maid was a witch, to drown the husband. Caitir Fhrangach ordered a large vessel to be filled with water and put in a dingy garret at the top of the castle. In the water she placed an empty wooden dish which floated on the surface. Down went Kate to the lowest cellar of the castle, and began her incantations. At first there was a slight movement of the water; then waves appeared on the surface: the wooden vessel began to rock: water dashed over its sides. The lady looked on with pale face and bloodshot eyes. The motion of water and vessel increased till one big wave broke over it and engulfed the little barque. Kate sent to tell her mistress that her husband's vessel has been sunk. Soon after, tidings reached home that the vessel in which he was sailing was wrecked and all aboard perished. Caitir Fhrangach was arrested and burned on Craig-na-Bhan, near Abergeldie.[1] There may be here some embellishments and later additions to the original tradition, but in essentials this was the practice that was followed elsewhere. Mammie Scott, the Stromness witch (in the early nineteenth century), arrived at a house in Caithness where she rested a short time. She had taken umbrage at the conduct of some men who had crossed the Pentland Firth with her that day. She asked her hostess for a tub of water and a wooden "caup," or "bummie" as it is called in Orkney. She set the bummie floating in the tub and began stirring the water with her finger. After a time the wooden vessel capsized and Mammie exclaimed, "Aye, there they go, but I'm sorry for the puir strange laddie that's wi' them." It became known that on that evening the Walls man, his two sons and the stranger they were ferrying across to Caithness, perished by the capsizing of the boat.[2] The same method was followed in Shetland.[3] At Port-

[1] John Grant, Legends of the Braes o' Mar, 47 f.

[2] Ferguson, Rambles, 70. [3] County Folk-Lore, III (O. and S.), 155.

mahomack in Easter Ross, a fisherman played false with a young woman. Her mother resolved to be revenged. Once when he was at sea with some other fishermen, mother and daughter went to a hollow between two high headlands, round which the boat was to sail. They carried with them a tub and a cog. The tub was filled with water and the cog was set afloat in it. The mother remained beside the magic instruments, while she bade her daughter go and see what was happening to the fishermen. She came back and reported the boat was floating keel uppermost with the men clinging to it. The mother was standing beside the tub with the cog in it, bottom up. This happened in the nineteenth century. The men were rescued.[1] There is a similar tale from Burghead. Kirsty M'Naughty was the Burghead witch. Some lads looked in at the roof of her hovel. They saw her take an old tub and half fill it with clean water. Then she drew forth from a cupboard a "caup" or wooden bowl which she set floating in the tub. Rolling up her sleeves, she began to make the water swirl round the tub, trying to swamp the bowl. At length she succeeded. At this moment the lads heard piercing cries from the harbour. A pilot boat was sunk, and one man, against whom M'Naughty had conceived an antipathy, was drowned.[2]

The power of overthrowing an enemy at sea by sorcery must have been invaluable when employed in warfare. According to Greek tradition Nectanebus, the last native king of Egypt, about 358 B.C., was a great world conqueror and master magician. He caused to be made small wax figures of the men and ships of his foes and also of his own men and ships. He set them in a bowl of water, those representing his own navy on one side, those representing the enemy on the other. Then he summoned his magic powers, and by his enchantments, the figures fought on the water. As the foreign men and ships were vanquished and sank to the bottom of the bowl, so did the real ships and crews of his adversary sink to the floor of the ocean.[3]

The burning of the image was associated with another idea of great antiquity. It might not be an ordinary enemy that was consumed. It might be the witch herself; in destroying her

[1] Folk-Lore Journal, VII, 282 f.
[2] Jeffrey, History of Burghead, 26 ff.
[3] Summers, Geography, 15 f.

thus, malignant influences were removed and prosperity secured. In Babylonia the image of the witch or sorcerer was made of wax, honey, clay, pitch, or metal. It was burned, while the sacred formulæ were recited. As the image was thus consumed the witch was supposed to suffer the tortures of the fire and to be gradually annihilated. A prayer employed in invoking the deity in such a case is furnished by Prof. Jastrow :—

> I turn to thee, I implore thee, I raise my hands to thee,
> I sink down at thy feet,
> Burn the sorcerer and the witch !
> Blast the life of the dreaded sorcerer and witch !
> Let me live that I may make thy heart glad and humbly pay homage to thee.[1]

Disease could be removed by this method.[2] There are traces of this ancient belief and practice in Scotland. Not long ago there was a quarrel between two families belonging to the fishing population of Golspie. One of the families had been unsuccessful at the herring fishing and attributed their ill-luck to the evil wishes of the other family. The unfortunate crew applied to an old woman in the village who was well versed in the ways of witches and how to deal with them. She advised them "to meet in front of their house at midnight to 'burn the witch' and she would be with them to see it done. A fire was lit before the house, and all the members of the unlucky family and their relations stood in the circle about it, with their hands joined together. Meantime the old woman, who had prepared a rag model of an old hag with a great number of pins stuck into it, advanced to the fire, and after muttering a few unintelligible words, threw the model into it. While it burned away, they all danced round, shouting and screaming at the pitch of their voices till it was completely consumed. Then the old woman told the unlucky family that their enemy would have no more power over them and they believed it."[3] There is here much that suggests the burning of the witch at Halloween and Yule. The motive is the same, but the insertion of the pins speaks of kinship with the pictour or image. The witch that did the havoc

[1] M. Jastrow, Religion of Babylonia, H.D.B., V, 552*b* ; Religion of Babylonia and Assyria, 305, 314.

[2] Tylor's Researches, 122.

[3] Nicholson, Golspie, 83.

was destroyed as her image was consumed. Good fortune would ensue.

At New Deer in Aberdeenshire, early in the nineteenth century, a cow was very ill, bellowing and climbing the wall. The farmer sent for Lily Grant, a noted witch-doctor in Whitehills, Banffshire. Unable to cure it, Lily stuck the cow's heart full of pins and then burned it at a dykeside—an act which she declared would cause the witch as much pain as if her own heart were being treated that way.[1] Another instance of a similar act comes from Durham. A poor woman, wife of a miner, was charged with stealing a fowl. She admitted the offence, explaining she had committed the theft to enable her to work out a charm to cure a sick child. A witch told her to get a hen, " take out the heart, stick it full of pins and roast it at midnight over a slow fire, first closing up any communication with the outer air. If this were duly done, the hag promised that as the heart was gradually consumed, health would return to the suffering child." [2] This is an instance of destroying by imitative magic the witch cause of the disease. In the *Observer* of 29th January, 1928, there is recorded a case of the " bleeding heart " which came to light in Genoa the previous week. A young woman lost her handbag in a motor bus. It was opened at the offices of the company, and inside it, amongst other things, there was found a small cardboard box containing a bleeding heart pierced with a number of pins. The owner of the bag was discovered and reluctantly explained to the police the presence of the heart. She confessed that, having been forsaken by her lover, she had consulted a witch who told her to get the heart of a lamb freshly killed, pierce it with pins, and bury it in the corner of a cemetery, together with the unfaithful lover's photograph. This would infallibly ensure his return. The girl was on her way to perform this rite when she lost her handbag. This seems kin to the New Deer and Durham examples. The bleeding heart is to be buried, not burned, but both methods were sometimes employed in disposing of the pictour, and here the burying may be regarded as an alternative way of destroying the witch cause of the trouble that overtook the maiden.

6. *The Bag.*—Among other implements which the witch

[1] Milne, Myths, 10. [2] Henderson, Folk-Lore, 222 f.

employed in her evil working was the bag. This is fully described by the Auldearn crew. Isobel Gowdie says that in the winter of 1660, when Mr. Harrie Forbes, minister at Auldearn, was sick, " we made a bag of the galls, flesh, and guts of toads, grains of barley, parings of the nails of fingers and toes, the liver of a hare and bits of clouts. We steeped this altogether all night among water, all minced into small pieces through other, and when we did put it among the water, Satan was with us and learned us the following words to say thrice over. They are thus :—

He is lying in his bed—he is lying sick and sair :
Let him lie intill his bed two months and three days mair !
Secondly :
Let him lie intill his bed—let him lie intill it sick and sore,
Let him lie intill his bed, months two and three days more.
Thirdly :
He shall lie intill his bed, he shall lie in it sick and sore :
He shall lie intill his bed two months and three days more.

" When we learned all these words from the Devil, as said is, we fell all down upon our knees with our hair down over our shoulders and eyes, and our hands lifted up and our eyes stedfastly fixed upon the Devil, and said the forsaid words thrice over to the Devil strictly against Master Harrie Forbes his recovering from the said sickness." [1] The postures here are the same as when engaged in their prayers or curses, or in making an image. It is not stated whether the parings of the nails of the fingers and toes were those of the minister of Auldearn, but the witch should be in possession of either of these or of a lock of hair, or of something else belonging to her intended victim. The toad was in high favour with sorcerers. Its head was thought to contain a jewel, and from its body was believed to exude a deleterious substance which therefore made it of supreme value as a constituent of the witch's bag.[2]

Perhaps the witches were wise in their generation. Sir W. Arbuthnot Lane says the toad produces " two drugs of the very greatest curative value in the large oval glands behind the ears. One contains a secretion equivalent to adrenalin, which is indispensable in some operations, and the other produces a sub-

[1] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 609 f. [2] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, 406.

stance equivalent to digitalis, which is irreplaceable in treating heart disease." [1]

Janet Breadheid reveals the composition of the bag which was to destroy the lairds of Park and Lochloy and their male children. There were dog's flesh, and sheep's flesh, minced very small with an axe, and boiled a whole forenoon in a pot among water. Then Janet took it out, and the devil, with his own hand, put it in a sheep's bag, constantly stirring it about with his hands. As in the preparations to destroy Mr. Harrie Forbes, the witches were all on their knees, hair over their eyes, praying to the devil, and repeating words he had taught them that it might kill the lairds of Park and Lochloy and all their male children.[2] There is a great similarity in the composition and the ceremonial so far. As to how the bag was employed the practice varied. Where possible it appears that it was swung round the head of the person they intended to kill. In the night time, says Gowdie, they all came into the " chalmer " where Mr. Harrie Forbes lay, with their hands all smeared out of the bag, to swing it upon Mr. Harrie when he was sick in bed. The manuscript is defective here: it is not clear if they accomplished their purpose. Probably the minister was too wide-awake. It appears that somehow their purpose miscarried: " they could not prevail in the night time against him." So it was left to one of their number, who was intimate with him, to endeavour in the daytime to wring or swing the bag upon the said Mr. Harrie.[3] If he were to fall asleep, the opportunity might have been taken by any witch attendant. Bessie Wilson, in Auldearn, on the first Monday of the Raith, took a bag made of hare's livers, the flesh, guts, and galls of toads, nails of fingers and toes, and swung it on a young man called Thomas Reid, who died.[4] Swinging the bag was evidently the correct method, but it was not always possible to get so near the intended victim. In the matter of accomplishing the lairds' demise, it would have been too dangerous to approach them with their witch impedimenta. And Janet Breadheid says they came to Inshock by night and scattered the contents of the bag " upon, and down, above and about the gate," and other places, which the lairds and their sons would frequent. If any of them should

[1] *Daily Mail*, 2nd July, 1928.
[2] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 617 f.
[3] *Ibid.*, 610.
[4] *Ibid.*, 612.

touch or trample upon aught of it, they would develop boils and die.[1]

This bag resembles the "pig" which appears in the trial of Isobel Ritchie, wife of John Bayne. It was "ane lytill pig full of devylische confectionis of sorcerie," which was made by the devil, her master, her consort Jonet Grant, the Cromar witch, and herself. Deposited in the house, it caused the good man of Cloack to die "furiouslie."[2] It may have been swung, for there is a reference to "the devilrie and using of the said pig." The bag, called also the "infernal pillow" by Grant Stewart, was inserted in some snug corner about farm buildings and then woe to cattle and crops![3]

The material of which the bag itself was composed seems suggested by an eerie story of an Orkney witch. Among the charges against Marable Cowper, spouse to John Spens in the north side of Birsay, was one connected with a bag. When Margaret Corston came to see her in bed, Marable turned down the bedclothes, and let her see beside her, as it had been, a great bag like a swine's bladder, large at the one end and small at the other. Marable gave her visitor a hair-raising account of how the bag came into her possession. At her trial, she confessed it was a lamb's bladder. This suggests a likely source of the witch's bag.[4]

7. *Carrion.*—Carrion in various forms was another of the witch's tools. Sometimes the whole carcase of an animal was employed. At Botriphnie on 12th February, 1656, compeared George Riach in Slagrein, complaining against Marjorie Barron for saying that his mother, in prejudice of his neighbours, buried a cat and her four feet upwards. Such an act prevented the kye and chickens from thriving. George Riach was removing from Slagrein, and being jealous of the incoming tenant, made his mother bury the cat, the feet upwards, in order to spite the incomers. "Nothing lucked there" it was said.[5] This unusual, and, as far as the North is concerned, apparently unique action had its affinities elsewhere. Here the burial with the feet upwards was to do an injury to those cultivating the holding. But the same method might be employed for a beneficent end, and the other instances of burying or suspending an animal with feet

[1] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 618.
[2] Sp. Misc., I, 141.
[3] Grant Stewart, *op. cit.*, 202.
[4] County Folk-Lore, III, 57 f.
[5] S.N. and Q., 2nd series, V (1904), 107.

upwards come under this category. They were designed to act as a preservative to the flocks and herds. "Thiers alludes to the superstitious practice of burying a dead horse, ox, cow, or sheep with the feet upwards under the threshold of the stable or in the fold as the preservative of other animals. The king's advocate assured Bodin that killing an animal and hanging it with the feet upwards at the stable door, had proved the salutary means of preserving his flock and herds from the contagion of a destructive distemper."[1] The late Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould said he had often observed, in the weald of Sussex, dead horses or calves hung up by the legs to the horizontal branch of a tree. It was thought lucky for the cattle. The animal suspended or buried with legs upwards may have originally been a sacrifice to some god, but flesh was buried in the earth, as the Botriphnie cat was buried, to bring damage upon the flocks and herds. It was a recognised practice with the dabblers in the magic art. They took a piece of carrion, cut it into small pieces and buried it in the dung heap or in the field or put it upon the lintel of the door. It was called "hackit flesh." If disease broke out among the animals on a farm, the dunghill was carefully searched for "hackit flesh." If found, it was removed to a distance and burned.[2] At Elgin in 1653, when Jonet Hossack appeared before the court, William Duncan said he knew nothing of her, but added that a year before he found a piece of flesh in his corn rig and that year the corn grew not well.[3]

A mixture of flesh was employed by the Auldearn coven with the same purpose. It also was called "hacked flesh." "When we would take the fusion away of any person's midden or dunghill, we would say thus (when we would put hacket flesh of an unchristened child, dog's and sheep's flesh and pairings of nails all hacked through other) :—

We put this intill this hame
In our Lord the Divellis name
The first hands that handles thee
Brunt and scalded shall they be.
We shall destroy house and hold
With the sheep and nowt [i.e. cattle] intill the fald,
And little shall come to the fore
Of all the rest of the little store."[4]

[1] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, 189 f.
[2] Gregor, Notes, 184 f.
[3] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 275.
[4] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 613.

This trafficking in human flesh reveals its savage origin. Among the Southern Aryans, the Rakshasas, a numerous tribe of demons, go sniffing after human flesh.[1] That the witches of the North-East did engage in this traffic is shown not only by such statements as that of Gowdie's about the flesh of an unchristened child, but by other evidence. Bodies suspended on the gallows attracted the weird sisters. Jonet Wishart and her daughter, Violet Leyis, desired their serving woman to go at midnight to the gallows in Aberdeen, cut down the body of a man suspended there, take a part of all his members from it and burn the rest. The servant refused and was dismissed. On another occasion Jonet, crossing the links after midnight with Mrs. Taylor, directed her steps to the gallows. A corpse was hanging. The witch made her companion hold its foot, no doubt to steady the body, while she cut off a part of all the members.[2] Nocturnal practices like these show how debased and dehumanised the witches had become. The flesh, thus obtained, might be devoted to filling their bag or used as "hackit flesh," or in potions or powders. Flesh shades away into the "meels" or "meldis" of the churchyard, which may be only a substitute for the use of the corpse itself.[3] This earth from the graveyard, in which human bodies had decayed, was believed to be potent in working weal or woe according to the magician's intent. Sometimes it was employed to induce disease.[4] It might be employed to "reist" a mill wheel. It should be taken from the churchyard at midnight, and thrown into the race, at the same time repeating the Lord's Prayer backwards.[5]

A variation of the "hackit flesh" was to be found at the seaboard. "Raun" (i.e. fish roe) was employed to injure a neighbour's cattle and belongings. In 1659 a supposed witch, Jean Hunter, was tried at Fetteresso for wronging "Thomas Naughtie in Windings, in his goods to his great loss." David Watt, giving evidence, stated that his former wife and Jean Hunter, having discorded at the mill, Jean, pretending to be reconciled, gave his wife "a piece of fish raune," with the result that his wife became almost distracted. When he threatened the witch with burning, his spouse soon recovered.[6]

[1] Kelly, Curiosities, 28.
[2] Sp. Misc., I, 90, 94.
[3] Gomme, Ethnology, 113 f.
[4] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, 380 f.
[5] Gregor, Notes, 183.
[6] Burnett, Kirks of Cowie and Fetteresso, 38.

8. *Threads, Cloth, Clew.*—Threads, cloth, and the clew were common weapons in the witch's hands for effecting her purpose, whether it was good or evil. Threads, particularly coloured threads, were employed by sorcerers in classical times. In Petronius' "Satyricon," 130, the old witch, in order to restore Eucolopius, "took out of her bosom, a hank of various colours and bound it round my neck." In Virgil, "Eclogues," VIII, the sorcerer says, "First these three threads with threefold colours varied, I round thee twine." The sacred thread appears in the Hindu religion. The coloured threads constituted part of the equipment of the Scottish witch. Jonet Lucas was accused of having, by inspiration of the devil, her master, in her purse "all sorts of thrwmis and threidis cutit, of all cullouris, with ane peice cruickit weir like a fish hook, quhair with thou bewichit mony and diveris personis." This charm was found in her purse when she was apprehended in the kirk of Lumphanan.[1] The woollen material might take the form of a piece of coloured cloth. In the trial of Jonet Davidson, it was stated there was found under her house door divers pieces of cloth of divers hues and colours, which she employed in her witchcraft and hid there till they were required.[2] An enchanted clout thrown into the fire almost caused the house to be consumed. The clew was a familiar form in which the threads appeared.

Jean Hunter of Fetteresso, suspected of witchcraft, was seen "as if she had been winding up a clew craunging downward toward the earth." On being questioned as to what she was doing, she replied, "she was seiking the end of a clew she had lost."[3]

Margaret Ogg, in Marywell, bewitched Margaret Ross by taking a green clew and "blowing off of the clew" in Margaret's face, with the result that she contracted a deadly disease.[4] Isobel Cockie was charged with the death of Cristane Leslie who found a witch's clew, "a clew of all hewis," in the morning in the dung heap. Cristane, fearing it was of witch origin, took it home and threw it in the fire. The clew gave such a great crack that they thought the house would have fallen down and smothered them. Immediately thereafter Cristane took to bed and within twenty days died.[5] It was risky to tamper with the witch's tools. These

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 149. [2] *Ibid.*, 150.
[3] Burnett, *op. cit.*, 38. [4] Sp. Misc., I, 144. [5] *Ibid.*, 112.

clews were dropped about farm steadings, or in the vicinity of dwelling houses with malice intent. If the finder took them and burned them, disaster inevitably followed. Jonet Wishart told a shepherd to take certain "droggis of witchcraft," which she had made, "such as old shone," and cast them into the fire of John Club, her neighbour. Since that time John had become altogether "depauperit." [1]

9. *Magic knots* also played their part in witching and unwitching. This, too, was a very old practice. A favourite means by which a Babylonian witch secured a hold on her victim was by tying knots on a cord, and with each knot she repeated a spell.[2] A man in the Orkney Islands was utterly ruined by nine knots cast on a blue thread and given to his sister.[3] At Aberdeen, on 19th October, 1665, James Smith from Cluny was reported to the Synod for "using enchantment by casting knots at marriages for unlawful ends." [4] The knots cast at marriage were evidently with an evil motive. For at the wedding all knots should have been unloosened in the costume of the bride and bridegroom—a custom that lingered long in the Highlands. The witch's knots on the principle of homœopathic magic tied up the mother and prevented the consummation of the marriage.[5]

10. *Miscellaneous.*—There were several other practices to which occasional reference is made in the civil and ecclesiastical records. There were potions in which the witch had put some of her "droggis of enchantments": these potions would be poisoned when the object was to inflict fatal injury. John Philp, the Banff witch, confessed to giving of potions and using orisons to George Brebner in Cullen, who became worse thereafter.[6] Here Philp may have had no evil design. His purpose may have been benevolent, but if so, it seems to have miscarried. Marable Cowper in Birsay caused David Mowat to drink a cup of ale, whereafter he took sickness.[7] In this case, too, the intention does not seem to have been hostile. Poison is specifically mentioned at some of the trials. Jonet Wishart bought "rottoun poysown," to poison John Collison who became Provost.[8]

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 87.
[2] Jastrow, Religion of Babylonia, H.D.B., V, 552*b*.
[3] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, 307.
[4] Stuart, Selections, 280.
[5] Frazer, Scapegoat, 295.
[6] Register of Privy Council, 2nd series, IV, 637 ff.
[7] *Ibid.*, VIII, 355.
[8] Sp. Misc., I, 93.

A leaf, "after thy devilish enchantments and poison laid thereon," was divided in two. One half of the leaf was sent to one woman, the other half to a second, to eat. After they had eaten, they contracted a mortal disease. This was one of the counts in the dittay against Katherine Gerard, witch.[1] To bring death on mankind, the elf arrows were also believed to be employed by the witches. Gowdie says, "Then the devil gave me an arrow and caused me shoot a woman in that field, which I did and she fell down dead."[2]

Hairs might be employed like threads and were "cutit." Mr. John Ros, minister at Lumphanan, says of Agnes Fren that she was indicted to have taken three hairs out of her own cow's tail and to have cut them in small pieces and to have put them in the trough of her cow, which thereafter gave milk, and the neighbour's cows gave none. She thus injured her neighbour's cows, while benefiting herself.[3] Hair was sometimes associated with grass. In 1664 Marjory Sim was charged with giving a grass with hair about it in a clout to Alexander Dunbar and others.[4] But grasses by themselves were occasionally employed to work an injury. In the trial of Katherine Craigie, she is charged with bringing a lingering disease upon Annabel Murray by three grasses bound in a knot.[5]

To cause bad luck to the tenant of a new house, it was only necessary to sweep it clean and take away the sweepings. In the old days, the floor was of earth, and to leave the house clean was to ensure misfortune to the newcomers. "Dirt's luck" was the proverb. An instance of this came to light in proceedings before the Presbytery of Dingwall. On 24th June, 1673, compeared Alexander M'Kenzie of Touvie, being referred from the session of Dingwall. The offence was too grave for the parochial court to deal with. M'Kenzie complained that Donald Munro and his wife in flitting from a house of his in Dingwall did take a great quantity of earth of the house with him, and did cross-cut all the couples thereof. This action "appearing unwarrantable and superstitious did hinder the tenant's entry, who had agreed to dwell in the said house." Munro and his wife denied the cross-cutting, but said that in removing from the old home

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 175.
[2] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 609.
[3] Sp. Misc., I, 191.
[4] Cramond, Church of Rathven, 25.
[5] County Folk-Lore, III (O. and S.), 70.

they did sweep a little quantity of earth, having some corn in it, and took it with them to be food to their fowls.[1] This is a virtual admission of the charge of removing the earth.

An example of how a weapon usually regarded as protective might become potent in destruction appears in the counsel Jonet Wishart gave to the wife of John Cheyne at Andat, brother of the Laird of Esslemont. Jonet persuaded the good wife to take "nine piklis of quhyt [i.e. wheat] and ane peice rantrey and put them in the four nwkis of his houss." Immediately their "haill guidis traikit [i.e. declined, fell away] and fell down deid, and the rest of their geir daily melted away like snow, so that from being a man with 10,000 marks, now he is at the point of beggary." [2]

[1] Mackay, Records of Inverness, 329 f.; cf. Gregor, Notes, 53.
[2] Sp. Misc., I, 92.

CHAPTER V.

SAFEGUARDS.

As a protection of man and beast against the witch's power, the rowan or mountain ash took a first place. At seasons of peril, within living memory, in most parts of the North-East, small pieces of rowan tree and honeysuckle were placed over the byre door inside, "in the crap o' the wa."

> The ran-tree an' the widd-bin
> Haud the witches on come in.

A cowherd wore a sprig of rowan to keep the witches from his charge. He was often furnished with a rod cut from the same tree. This rod would never injure any of the cattle, even if he struck them hard.

Before the cows were put out to pasture for the first time after calving, a red thread and sometimes a cross of "ran-tree" were tied round their tails.

> Ran-tree and red threed
> Pits the witches to their speed

A red burning peat, on which a little salt was sprinkled, was laid down in the "greap," in the door-way, through which the animals were led out. Such a provision rendered them witchproof. Not only was the rowan placed over the byre doors, but it was equally necessary at the danger periods to fix a piece of rowan over the stable doors to guard the horses. "Pieces of holly along with rowan," says Dr. Gregor, "were placed inside over the door of the stable to prevent the entrance of the nightmare. My informant has cut the tree for this purpose."[1] When a mare was taken from the stable the first time after foaling, a rowan cross was tied with red thread to

[1] Folk-Lore Journal, VII, 41.

her tail. A horse would not have been left in an open shed all night, unless it had a rowan cross attached, lest the witches might come and employ him on some of their long rides.[1] Red appears frequently in the protective charms. This colour was said to be sacred to Thor, the god of lightning. The witch's arts were of no avail against what was encircled by red. The "ran-tree" and the holly with their red berries, and the red woodbine all possessed this saving colour. The Romans used to hang red coral round the necks of their children to guard them from peril. In Scotland, coral beads were hung round the necks of children to protect them from the evil eye.[2]

Again, there were natural seasons when the witches were abroad in tremendous force. On May Eve, the evil spirits were engaged in their maleficent activities, traversing air and land and sea. Pennant, writing in 1769 of Lower Banffshire, says, "Some superstitions still lurk in this cultivated county. The farmers carefully preserve their cattle against witchcraft by placing boughs of the mountain ash and honeysuckle in their cow-houses on the 2nd of May. They hope to preserve the milk of their cows and their wives from miscarriage by tying red threads about them."[3] As at the period of calving, so now crosses, tied with red thread, were put in the "easing" of the wall. Next morning, they were affixed to the tails of the animals when they were driven out to pasture. Many still alive remember when this precautionary measure was taken at the beginning of May. Halloween was another season when the witch brood was let loose in full force. Lammas also demanded that man should be on his guard against the powers of darkness. To prevent the witches taking out the horses, crosses made of "ran-tree" were placed over the doors of all the houses at a farm on Lammas Day at noon. This was the practice at Tyrie in Aberdeenshire.[4]

The rowan was one of the most effectual counter charms to the witches. In India there is a tree, closely resembling the rowan, to which were ascribed similar properties. "Near Boitpoor in Upper India," says Bishop Heber, "I passed a fine tree of mimosa with leaves at a little distance so much resembling those of the mountain ash that I was for a moment deceived and

[1] Folk-Lore Journal, VII, 278.
[2] Napier, Folk-Lore, 36.
[3] Pennant, Tour, 69.
[4] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, VII, 277.

asked if it did not bring fruit. They answered No! but that it was a very noble tree, being called the Imperial tree for its excellent properties: that it slept all night and wakened and was alive all day, withdrawing its leaves if anyone attempted to touch them. Above all, however, it was useful as a preservative against magic: a sprig worn in the turban or suspended over the bed was a perfect security against all spells, evil eye, etc., in so much that the most formidable wizard would not, if he could help it, approach its shade. I was amused and surprised to find the superstition which in England and Scotland attaches to the rowan tree here applied to a tree of nearly similar form." [1] This account of the Imperial tree of India speaks of it as possessing the same defensive powers against the black art as are ascribed to the mountain ash in Scotland. But it seems to reveal a still older belief than that which is associated with its Scottish counterpart. To it is ascribed personal life—it sleeps, it wakes, it watches. At one time it was doubtless worshipped as divine. Probably in a distant past, this was the case with the rowan tree in our own country. Latterly, it had come to be regarded merely as a charm against the malevolent powers of witches.[2] A mountain ash was said to be found in every churchyard in Wales. It was seen keeping guard over every cottage and farm house in the North of Scotland. It was the sacred tree of the Scandinavians. It became the guardian deity of many a home. The reason why the witches shunned any place secured by the "ran-tree" is revealed in the Wilkie MS. "A witch who is touched with a branch of rowan, by a christened man, will be the victim carried off by the devil when he comes next to claim his tribute." This tribute was usually believed to be paid by the fairies: in the popular belief the qualities, the virtues, the vices of witch and fairy were often intermingled.[3]

Another potent preservative, which was also a means of removing the witch's spell after it had been cast, was the practice of "scoring abune the breath." This was a step a man might take if he dreaded the action of a particular wretch. If he drew blood above her breath, i.e. above her nostrils, she lost all power to injure. The Portmahomack fisherman whose jilted

[1] Chambers. Popular Rhymes, 328. [2] Cf. p. 76.

[3] For rowan, cf. Beaton, Back o' Bennachie, 24, Gregor, Notes, 183; Milne, Myths, 6.

sweetheart tried to drown him by her magic art,[1] on learning the cause of his shipwreck, resolved to safeguard himself for the future. He watched his opportunity, fell upon the lady, and drew blood from " above the breath," i.e. he cut her on the forehead in the form of a cross. The man was punished for assault, and the woman, ever after, wore a black band round her forehead.[2] A gentler way of accomplishing the same object is indicated from Corgarff. Take a silver pin, conceal it between the fingers and the thumb of the left hand, try to meet the witch in the morning " atween the sin and the sky," pass her on the right side; in passing draw blood from above the eyes. Keep the pin covered with blood and the witch has no power over you.[3] This is a later refinement of the earlier practice, when the proper weapon was a nail out of a horse shoe. Besides, the object of the rite was not to get the witch's blood, but to pierce the skin. It was an old custom in the North-East. Pennant, writing of Lower Banffshire, says, " They bleed the supposed witches to preserve themselves from her charms." [4] When the Scottish clans were engaged in their forays, according to the historian of Moray, it was reckoned a good omen if they met an armed man. If a barefooted woman crossed their pathway, they seized her and drew blood from her forehead.[5] She might be a witch. She might bring them disaster: but they would insure themselves against harm by scoring her " above the breath." This scoring took its rise in a belief that had its affinities in German folklore. There the werewolf had to be stabbed with knife or pitchfork thrice in the brows before it could be disenchanted.[6] The animal skin was conceived as a cloak thrown around the creature. Pierce the skin, and the man or woman inside was revealed. The mark had to be made on the brow. In the witch's case, when her skin was cut, her power of working evil was gone.[7]

Scoring above the breath was resorted to, not only when evil was anticipated from the sorceress, but also when it had already fallen upon her victim. At Elgin, in 1647, amongst the charges against Janet Cowie was one that she rendered John Purs in

[1] See p. 207.
[2] Folk-Lore Journal, VII, 282 f.
[3] *Ibid.*, 279.
[4] Tour, 69.
[5] Shaw, History of Province, 232.
[6] S. Baring-Gould in Henderson's Folk-Lore, 182.
[7] Frazer, Balder, I, 315.

Elgin unable for nine weeks to retain any food in his stomach. One half of the day he did sweat and the other half he did tremble, and did never recover till he bled her with a tree ; immediately thereafter he recovered his health.[1] In 1750, a case came before the Presbytery of Tain. Three men dragged a woman and her daughter out of bed and laid them on the floor. Two of the men held the women while the third " scored and cut their foreheads with an iron tool, calling them witches." The culprits were rebuked before the congregations of Rosskeen and Alness. One of the men believed the consumption from which he suffered was caused by the witches. He adopted this method to secure recovery, but his efforts were fruitless. He died at an early age.[2]

A young man in Braemar suddenly took ill, after offending a witch. The illness was mysterious. The only possible conclusion was that he had been bewitched. The remedy was in his own hands. He must score above the witch's breath. " And I think," said Mrs. Taylor's informant, " that the funniest thing I ever saw was the lad watching like a cat for his opportunity, and when he got her in a suitable place, tearing the mutch aff her head, an' scratching her face till the bleed cam." [3] The lad then recovered.

This method of removing the witch's spell, might be employed when it had fallen upon a man's possessions, his flocks, and his herds, or his nets, and boats. The cattle on a Buchan farm were not thriving. The farmer consulted the well-known witch-doctor, Sawtie, as he thought witch influence was at work. " Oh, aye," said Sawtie, " an' I can let ye see the man's face its deein' ye a' the ill an' ye'll nivver get yir nowt t' thrive till ye draw bleed o' 'im abeen the breath." The farmer returned home, armed himself with the gully knife with which the servant was cutting oatcakes for the girdle ; and then went straight to a neighbouring farmer who was ploughing. He seized him, laid him on the ground, and with the knife inflicted on his forehead, just above the eyebrows, two cuts in the form of a cross. The cattle throve daily afterwards.[4] On October 8th, 1845, a man from Portmahomack was tried at Tain for inflicting a wound with a knife on

[1] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 356. This would seem rather a dangerous method. May not tree be a mistake of the scribe for preen ?

[2] Polson, *op. cit.*, 63. [3] Taylor, Braemar Highlands, 324.

[4] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, I, 58.

the forehead of an old woman, and was sentenced to three months' imprisonment. He believed she had bewitched him and his nets.[1] Writing, in 1914, a correspondent says, that only a few years before a case was reported from Dingwall of a young fisherman who believed he had been bewitched by an elderly woman in the village. She thus prevented him catching fish and caused his boat to be upset. He therefore waylaid the witch and put his knife into her to draw blood. He was arrested for assault.[2] The fundamental belief that held these poor folks was belief in the witch's power of working evil. Scoring above the breath was one sure way of breaking her spell.

Another method of averting harm was by casting stones behind the back. In 1674, Margaret Spence in Banff was convicted of casting water seven times out of the sea towards the town and five stones into the sea in time of morning prayers. She protested "on her soul's salvation," that she did it for preventing the fever.[3] It is difficult to say how the water assisted in this purpose. At Buckie, on New Year's Day, they took water from the sea and sprinkled it over the fire-place.[4] In both cases it would be a protective charm. The rite of throwing stones is common among savage peoples. The evil was believed to be embodied in the sticks or stones employed and was thus cast away.[5] Margaret Spence by her action cast the fever into the sea. There are other traces of this primitive practice. As late as the middle of the nineteenth century at Macduff and Rosehearty, "it was a custom to throw into the water, before entering it, three stones of different sizes, beginning with the largest. White stones if they could be found were preferred (Rosehearty). Others again threw in a few without regard to numbers. Words were repeated."[6] Any evil spirit lurking in the water would be received by the stones, and accordingly no hurt would come to the bather. This interpretation of the action seems to find confirmation in the confession of Isobel Gowdie, who sends the fevers into stones amongst other receptacles. The form of words employed was as follows: "I forbid the quaking fevers, the sea fevers, the land fevers and all the fevers that ever God ordained,

[1] *Aberdeen Journal*, Notes and Queries, VII, 50.
[2] *Ibid.*, 124.
[3] Cramond, Annals of Banff, II, 50.
[4] See p. 109.
[5] Frazer, Scapegoat, 23.
[6] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, II, 356.

out of the head, out of the hearts, out of the back, out of the sides, out of the knees, out of the thighs, from the points of the fingers to the tips of the toes : out shall the fevers go, some to the hill, some to the hap, some to the stone, some to the stock. , In Saint Peter's name, Saint Paul's name, and all the saints of Heaven, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost." [1] Margaret Clerk in Lumphanan " pudlit " a long time in a hole amongst water, casting water, earth and stone over her shoulders, and the devil was beside her in the likeness of a hen.[2] James Ogg from the same parish took nine stones from his own rig and cast them on Alexander Cobban's rig of corn.[3] It would seem as if he were transferring the evil from his own to his neighbour's croft.

" Casting fire " after a witch was another preservative against evil. In 1610 Marjory Mearns spat thrice in the face of Margaret Measoun and cast fire.[4] Bessie Smith took up the tongs and cast fire after Margaret Murray, a reputed witch of Elgin.[5]

A way of warding off the evil eye when engaged in an important task was to lock the door and screen the window. This effectually prevented being overlooked. In the coast villages, when the dyeing of wool took place, this precaution was taken. No evil eye could then see the operation and prevent the wool taking on the dye.[6] This method had the virtue of simplicity.

The magic circle was another safeguard against the witch's malign spells. As with the rowan, it was employed at natural and sacred seasons. In milking the new calved cow, it took the form of a ring. " Lisbeth on her part had gone for the milking cog, at the bottom of which she had put a shilling, and when she sat down to milk she pulled off her wedding ring and milked several strains from each teat to keep away the witches." [7] She milked through the ring. This was in the nineteenth century. The form in which the circle appeared as a counter charm amongst the Morayshire and Inverness-shire farmers was the rowan hoop. " On Hallow day and Beltane, the people of Strathspey make a hoop of rowan tree through which all the sheep and lambs are forced to pass evening and morning." [8] In Aberdeenshire

[1] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III. 609.
[2] Sp. Misc., I, 158 f. [3] *Ibid.*, 190.
[4] Stuart, Selections from Records of Kirk Session, 74 f.
[5] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 300.
[6] Hutcheon, Days of Yore, 27. [7] Beaton, Back o' Bennachie, 24.
[8] Ramsay, Scotland and Scotsmen, II, 454.

a " seal " or binding was tied round the neck of the new calved cow and allowed to remain there for weeks.[1] In its various forms the magic circle acted as a preservative against the witches, particularly at those moments when they were most likely to inflict injury.

When evil threatened, mention of God's name was an effective protection. When a man or child was overpraised, it was felt that there was danger from the evil eye. In this " forespeaking," there was a combination of perils, namely from the look and the voice. It was necessary to deprecate the compliments. A healthy child might be forespoken, when it would become sickly. Some one had said " He's a bonny bairn," or " he's looking well the day," but they had spoken with an ill tongue and the parents had forgotten to say " God save the bairn." " The same custom of deprecating overpraise is seen among the Turks, among modern Italians and among ourselves, who each and all have a similar formula. A well-mannered Turk will not pay a compliment without Mashallah ! An Italian will not receive one without ' Grazio a Dio,' an Irishman without ' Glory be to God,' or the English peasant without ' Lord be wi' us.' "[2] The mention of God's name, His acknowledgment as Protector, averts the power of evil. In Scotland, when a friend first saw an infant, it was expected that he would ' cross its hand ' with silver. The silver prevented any danger from the evil eye or forespeaking.

[1] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, VII, 278.
[2] Elworthy, Evil Eye, 32.

CHAPTER VI.

TRANSFER.

THE blight caused by the witch to fall on man or beast might be removed by cure, in which case a counter-spell was employed by the "charmer," or by transfer when the disease was laid upon some creature, human or animal. To understand the conception underlying the transfer, one must consider the workings of the savage mind. Disease with primitive peoples is conceived as a separate entity, inhabiting the ailing body. It can be expelled and driven into another person, or it may be laid upon an animal. It may equally well be passed over to an inanimate object, though in this case the object is only the vehicle by which the trouble is conveyed to the first person who touches it.[1] The cock is employed as a scapegoat in various parts of India.[2] Amongst many West African tribes, a sick man's disease is transferred to a live fowl, which is then set free. Anyone catching the fowl also catches the disease.[3] With some Central Australian tribes, men suffering from a headache effect a cure by wearing women's headrings into which the pain passes. Then the rings are thrown away into the bush. The Bahima, a pastoral tribe of the Uganda Protectorate, often suffer from deep-seated abcesses. Their method of cure is to transfer the disease to some other person by rubbing herbs over the affected part and then burying them on a road where people are constantly passing. The one who first steps over this spot contracts the disease and the original patient recovers.[4] All these forms of healing are exemplified in the witch's art, which indicates whence it derives. Disease in the mind of the peasantry is something substantial and can be removed at will by the employment of the prescribed charms.

[1] Frazer, Scapegoat, 2.
[2] Tylor, Primitive Culture, II, 135.
[3] *Ibid.*, 191 f.
[4] Frazer, Scapegoat, 4, 6.

1. A malady may be transferred from a *person to a person.* There are many instances of this in the witch trials. At Elgin, in 1631, John Russell complained that Elspet Watson used a charm upon a sick child. His daughter coming into the house, Elspet said that the bairn's sickness would light upon her because she was the first to come in at the door. His daughter thereafter took to bed and died. The Presbytery find it proved that Elspet Watson is a charmer.[1] In the trial of Katherine Fernsche in Logie Coldstone, one of the counts in the dittay was that George Ritchie being sick, she promised his mother to remove his sickness. This she did by laying it on his sister who died.[2] The same conception of disease as a thing capable of transfer appears in the healing of Naaman. " The leprosy, therefore, of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow." [3]

Transfer of pains naturally connect themselves with what is designated the " couvade " or " hatching." A man or woman simulates the pangs of labour and thereby relieves the mother from whom the pains are supposed to be transferred to the actor. The transfer is accomplished on the principle of homœopathic or imitative magic. The father or some one else imitates the process of childbirth. This may be described as the pre-natal or pseudo-maternal couvade, to use the phrase employed by Sir J. G. Frazer. There is a post-natal couvade found amongst many savage peoples, but of this there is no evidence in the North of Scotland. But of the " man child-bed " or pre-natal couvade, there occurred more than one instance. Before citing these cases one example of the couvade amongst savage races may be mentioned. When childbirth overtakes the wife among the Central Californians, " the husband puts himself to bed and there, grunting and groaning, he affects to suffer all the agonies of a woman in labour. Lying there he is nursed and tended for some days as carefully as though he were the actual sufferer." [4]

At the time of the birth of James VI two other ladies in the castle were in the same condition as the royal mother, namely the Countess of Athole and Lady Reres. Later, Andrew Lundie told John Knox how he came to the castle on some business and

[1] Cramond, Records of Kirk Session of Elgin, 219 f.
[2] Sp. Misc., I, 187. [3] 2 Kings v. 27.
[4] Ling Roth, Journal of Anthropological Institute, XXII (1893), 217.

called for Lady Reres, who confided to him that "she was never so troublit with no pain that ever she bare, for the Lady Athole had casten all the pyne of the childbirth upon her." [1]

The first case from the North is one in which the witch midwife transferred the pains to the husband. Elizabeth Sang, wife of John Jameson in Auchinhove, being lying in child-bed undelivered, Margaret Clerk in Lumphanan by her witchcraft and sorcery cast "hir haill panes, dolouris and tormentis," upon John Jameson, her spouse, from which he never recovered.[2] This was a fatal ending to the transfer. A case which had a happier issue took place in the same parish. In 1595, about April, the same witch being summoned by the wife of Nicoll Ros, fiar of Auchlossan, when she was lying in child-bed, came and cast "the haill dolouris, seiknes, and pains quhilkis scho suld have sustenit" upon Andro Harper, who, during all the time of her travail, was "exceedinglie mervelouslie trublit," but, as soon as the gentlewoman was delivered, the pains departed from the said Andro.[3] The transfer in this case was probably to a dependent. Recovery, as was usual with the pseudo-maternal couvade, took place when the mother was delivered.

At Insch. on 17th March, 1650, Margaret Ogg is accused by the Presbytery of witchcraft, in transferring the pains of her daughter to Isabella Robertson. The latter's testimony was to the effect that after receiving some bread and cold kail from the sick woman, immediately she took a great pain in her belly. "After the swelling of her womb she did vomit till her bellie came to her very back." She suffered from Friday till the Lord's day at night when the pains of her mistress overtook her. When she woke out of her sleep, her mistress was delivered, and thereafter the pains left her except for some "stoundings" which continued for about a month. Various witnesses were called. One asserted Isabella Robertson was eased of her pains after her mistress was delivered and testified he heard women say it was like the sickness of a woman in travail.[4]

The transfer in the first of these cases was to the husband, in the other two, to a dependent. Here there is no question of connecting the couvade with the transfer of descent from the maternal to the paternal line. These are simply examples of the magical

[1] Chambers, Domestic Annals, I, 39.
[2] *Ibid.*, 157 f.
[3] Sp. Misc., I, 156 f.
[4] Davidson, Inverurie, 306.

transfer of sickness. The practice appears to be due, partly at least, to the fear of evil spirits, demons or witches, and the desire to deceive them. At birth both mother and child were in peril. The pseudo-father or mother, in making various sounds and exhibiting all the symptoms of travail, was making believe he or she was bringing forth the child. The demons would then concentrate their attention upon the pretended parent, and leave the true mother to bring forth in peace and safety. The pair of trousers, which among the fishing population used to be hung at the foot of the bed and believed to keep the fairies at a distance, was inspired by the same purpose. It was to deceive the evil spirits, and make them think it was no expectant mother that occupied the sick bed, but a man against whom their arts were powerless at the moment.

The cases in Lumphanan and Insch came before the church courts. Doubtless the belief and practice continued long after they had ceased to come under the ecclesiastical eye. At Langholm in 1772, the daughter of a woman, whose pains had been transferred to her husband by the midwife, was pointed out to Mr. Pennant. "I saw," says Pennant, "the offspring of such labour who kindly came into the world without giving her mother the least uneasiness, while the poor husband was roaring in agony, in his uncouth and unnatural pains." [1]

2. The most usual transfer of disease was *from man to animal* Two animals in particular have been noted as scapegoats. The cock has a long history as a disease bearer. Amongst almost every people the sacrifice of a live cock—"the yirding of a quik cok"—has been regarded as a cure for "the falling sickness." On the spot where the epileptic fell, a black cock was buried along with a lock of the patient's hair, and some parings of his nails. There must be no white feather, and the cock must be without blemish. When buried, recovery of the patient took place.[2] Mr. J. Calder Ross says his father, at a fair held in the south of Caithness, perhaps about 1850, saw a man suddenly seized with an epileptic fit. The onlookers did what they could for the sufferer. When the fit had passed, they took measures to pre-

[1] Pennant, Second Tour, 211. This section on the couvade has already appeared in the Caledonian Medical Journal, XIV, No. 1, and is included here by permission of the publishers.

[2] Mitchell, P.S.A.S., IV. 273 f.; K. Macdonald, Social and Religious Life in Highlands, 29 ff.

vent its recurrence, and dug a hole at the spot where the patient had fallen. With due ceremony, they buried therein a live cock. It was said that after this the man had only one other seizure.[1] The rite was designed, not so much to secure recovery at the moment, as to prevent a recurrence. Another case occurred within two miles of Dingwall about forty years ago. While a number of boys were at play, one fell down in a fit. His parents dug a hole and buried a cock alive at the spot where the boy fell. This was to prevent another attack.[2]

There is a suggestion of the transfer of disease from animal to woman. At Forgue, on the 19th September, 1647, Isobel Wilson was accused of charming a sick cow of John Findlay's in the parish of Drumblade and laying the sickness upon Margaret Hendrie, his servant. This seems a reversion of the natural order of things, and one hesitates to believe that it was a regular practice in the North. In the following month Wilson appeared before the Presbytery of Turriff, and from the evidence adduced it would seem she had charmed a cow with water. The serving woman, stepping upon the water was "swollen so big that there was no hope of her life."[3] What the accused set out to do was to cure the cow. Margaret Hendrie, accidentally coming in contact with the enchanted water, contracted the disease. But this was not due to any conscious purpose on the witch's part. Roger says people in the Orkney Islands will sometimes wash a sick man, and then throw the water down at the door in the belief that the sickness will leave the patient and be transferred to the first person who crosses the threshold.[4] But the infected water was usually thrown into a stream, when its powers were quickly dispersed, or cast upon some lonely spot where there would be little likelihood of its harming man or beast.

The cat was another noted scapegoat. Andro Man, the Rathven warlock, cured Alexander Simpson as follows: He put him nine times forward through a hesp of unwatered yarn, and then took a cat and put her nine times backward through the same hesp, saying his orations over his patient. Then he put the sickness on the cat, which instantly died. The man immediately recovered.[5] There are here the magic circle, the magic number, and the unwatered yarn, all helping to produce the

[1] S.N. and Q., 3rd series, I, 155.
[2] Folk Lore, 29 (1918), 86.
[3] Brebner, In Presbytery of Turriff,.
[4] Roger, Social Life, III, 226.
[5] Sp. Misc., I, 120.

desired effect upon the patient and, equally important, impressing his relatives, but they are merely accessory to the supreme act of transferring the patient's ailments to the cat.

In the witch ritual, the most efficacious method of transferring sickness to a cat was probably the same method as employed when "yirding a quik cok." In June, 1625, at Ellon, a couple were reported as having gone from Andet to Thomas Smith in Coldwells to get him to charm a sick child. They returned home and by his advice made a grave under the child's cradle, in the place where the cradle was rocked. They cut the cradle belt in nine pieces and took a quick cat and the cradle belt cut as aforesaid and buried them in the grave.[1] The idea is exactly the same as in the case of the quick cock sacrificed for the epileptic. There the hole was made on the spot where he was observed to have his seizure: here it is the place where the sick child lay in its cradle. There it was a lock of hair and some nail parings that proved the connecting-link between the epileptic and the fowl: here it is the cradle belt, as being in contact with the child, that forms the nexus between the sickly infant and the quick cat. This method seems to have passed into the general medical practice. The following cure for epilepsy was given in a medical treatise: "Take a little black sucking puppy (but for a girl take a bitch-whelp), choke it, open it and take out the gall. . . . Give it all to the child in the time of the fit, with a little tile tree flower water, and you shall see him cured, as if it were by a miracle, presently."[2] Here the sacrifice of the black puppy seems the survival of the old scapegoat.

The transference of the malady might be made to an ox. In 1631 John Philp, the Banff wizard, charmed Andro Clerk in Fintray by casting the sickness off him, and putting it upon an ox, worth forty marks, which thereafter died.[3]

3. Human ailments might also be transferred to the *inanimate creation*. Constantine Kennedy admitted before the Kirk Session of Fraserburgh in Katherine Millar's presence that "she laid [i.e. held] him over the fire and said 'Throu' the fire, and

[1] Mair, Narratives of Ellon Presbytery, 121.

[2] The Scots Magazine, new series, VIII (1891): article by Dr. Mitchell on "The Poor Man's Physician," a treatise by an eminent physician known as Sir John Moncrief, Baronet of Tippermalloch.

[3] Register of P.C. of Scotland, 2nd series, IV, 637.

throu' the fire: the dwynand fever is licht upon the fire wuid.' "[1] The fever passed to the fire. The same idea is represented in the rags suspended to the trees at holy wells. Like the tree, the fire was believed to be instinct with divine life, and to readily assume the burden of sickness. This is an intelligible idea. A more primitive conception is found in the transfer of the disease to that which could make no claim to the possession of personal life. In the case of whooping cough, if the patient were taken to the land of another proprietor, the disease was left there.[2] There is here not only a survival of the belief in the malady being a separate entity, capable of transfer, but also the tribal idea, which would leave aught that was evil upon the lands of another chief.

4. The transfer was frequently from *animal to animal.* When a horse, belonging to Duncan Alexander in Newburgh, was bewitched, Helen Fraser transferred the sickness from the horse to a young cow of Duncan's. The cow died, and was thrown into the Burn of Newburgh, for no one would eat her.[3] This is rather different from the ritual employed in the fire sacrifice to cure a whole herd of cattle.[4] There they sacrificed one of the number as an offering, to stay the plague which had broken out. Here the disease is transferred from one animal to another by the magic art.

As with whooping cough in children, so animal disease might be carried and left upon another Laird's land. The Synod of Aberdeen in April, 1659, recommended all ministers within the province to speak against charming, heathenish customs in cutting off the heads of beasts and carrying them from one Laird's lands to another.[5] This refers to the method by which the transfer was effected. The whole animal was not taken, though sometimes it might be. In transferring the diseased animal, or part of it to another estate, the disease was conveyed with it, and as the recipients would naturally object if they knew, this magic practice was usually followed under the darkness of night, and the animal deposited in some lonely unfrequented spot. "It is not over forty years," said Dr. Gregor, writing in 1881, "since a farmer in the parish of Keith on the lands of the Earl of Fife

[1] Cranna, Fraserburgh, 191.
[2] Gregor, Notes, 46.
[3] Sp. Misc., I, 106.
[4] See pp. 32 f.
[5] Stuart, Selections from Records, 250.

carted the carcase of an animal to a hill on the property of the Earl of Seafield and there buried it. In doing this act all care had to be used to avoid detection: for if the actors had been caught in the act, they would have had to pay dearly for the deed." [1] Strange how such a "heathenish" practice continued for almost two centuries after the Synod of Aberdeen uttered its warning.

On the cat were laid not only human ills, but any lurking disease in a new house. If there was any suspicion that ill-luck or a curse had been left, the cat was thrown into the house before anyone entered. An Orkney woman, on marriage, took the cat with her to her new home. If there was evil in the house, it fell upon the cat and it died, saving the lives of the family. There was always danger attaching to what was new. A new cradle was not used till the evil had been expelled. A live fowl was put into it. If there was enchantment in the cradle, it fell upon the cock or hen. Special safeguards were taken when a cradle was borrowed. If intended for a female child, a live cock was tied to it; if for a male child, a live hen was attached. The cradle was not allowed to touch the ground till it was placed on the floor of the house where it was to be used. The idea was that the live fowl would bear any evil that witch or fairy might lay on the cradle in the course of transport. A cat, while equally effectual as a disease bearer, would have been difficult to attach securely to, or confine in, a cradle.

[1] Gregor, Notes on Folk-Lore, 187.

CHAPTER VII.

BENEFICENT RITES.

1. *Fertility Charms.*—There were various fertility rites practised by the witches. Isobel Ritchie was accused of going, at the desire of the goodwife of Cloak and Elspet Forbes, her daughter, to Jonet Grant to devise by her art of witchcraft that the said Elspet should bear lads. Thereafter she bore six lads, but because they were conceived by the devilish art of witchcraft, they died immediately after they were born.[1] At the well of Melshach the aged crone, who was sprinkling the women with water had much in common with the witch who, by her black art, induced fertility in women.[2]

The witch was a powerful factor in securing that the animals, too, should not be barren. Various incantations were uttered in the farmyard. Margaret Og of Aberdeen was charged with being a manifest witch "in that by the space of a yeir syn or theirby, thy kow being in bulling, and James Farquhar, thy awin gude son, haulding the kow, thow stuid on the ane syd of the kow and thy dochter Batrix Robbie on the vther syd, and quhen the bull was lowping the kow, thow tuik a knyff and keist ower the kow and thy dochter keaptt the sam and keist it over to the agane, and this ye did thryiss quilk thow can nocht deny."[3] The witch employed the knife to ward off any evil influence and so secure that the cow should bring forth in her season. She was also instrumental in seeing that the land should yield its increase to those she favoured, just as she made weeds and thistles spring up upon the fields of those she disliked. Andro Man was charged with using special charms to ensure a good harvest. He told them to put the harrow on the land and bade them say a special oration nine sundry times, and then the corn would come safely to the barn that year.[4] By the instructions of John Philp, the

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 141.
[2] Sp. Misc., I, 143.
[3] P. 50.
[4] *Ibid.*, 122.

Banff wizard, George Fraser and his wife went through a form of enchanting their oat seed in the barn, with the result that a far more bountiful crop was produced.[1]

Jonet Wishart combined the ritual of throwing stones with partial nudity, to secure a good harvest. She was charged with having, in harvest, gone to her own goodman's croft, called Round About, and there taken all her clothes about her head, being naked from the middle down. She then took a great number of stones, and going backwards cast one part behind her over her head, and the other part forward.[2] This was a rite no doubt intended to avert barrenness and secure prosperity for her land. The nudity witnesses to the early origin. "Both matrons and girls among the people of Britain are in the habit of staining their body all over with woad when taking part in the performance of their sacred rites: rivalling thereby the swarthy hue of the Ethiopians, they go in a state of nature."[3] In India, too, certain tribes went naked when performing their religious rites.

Amongst the fertility rites should probably be included the use of urine. In 1616, Effie Fumester, in Elgin, was charged with bidding Agnes Fumester cast strang in the fire, so that she might get her heart's desire of another cottar.[4] Among the Indonesians in the island of Kisser, a young man urinates on the urine of his heart's desire, hoping that this will make her love him.[5] The Eskimo have a ceremony of hunting the mischievous spirit, Tuña, from the house. In the last act a man brings a vessel of urine and casts it in the fire.[6] Much virtue attached to the use of stale urine in the Highlands in the eighteenth and even nineteenth centuries. "In Breadalbane, when the plough is first yoked, it is the custom yearly to sprinkle the horses, and then the coulter with it, and the wisp of straw used for that purpose is thrown between the mould board and the beam. . . . Upon the evening of every day, at the end of a quarter of the year, and sometimes oftener, it is also customary to take a wisp of straw and dip it in human urine and sprinkle all the cattle in the byre with it. . . . In Glenlyon a landlady, on the morning of New

[1] Register of P.C., V (1904), 566.
[2] Sp. Misc., I, 93.
[3] Pliny, quoted by Gomme, Ethnology in Folk-Lore, 38 f.
[4] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 149.
[5] Frazer, Indonesians: Hastings' Encycl. R. and E., VII, 324.
[6] Frazer, The Magic Art, II, 164.

Year's Day, sprinkles urine upon the whole family as they are getting out of bed." [1] Till recent times human urine has been used to cause easy delivery to a woman in travail.[2]

There are, I believe, rites in connection with betrothal amongst the travelling tinkers or gypsies in which urine plays its part. Originally the ceremonies associated with it were regarded as securing fertility to man and beast and field. These ceremonies, from their nature, are rarely referred to in the church records. In 1615 Margaret Davidson, spouse to Andrew Kindness, Banff, was accused at Elgin of going upon Agnes Hay's house and making water thereon. When Margaret saw the new moon she ran thrice widdersones about (i.e. against the course of the sun). Then she sat down in a state of partial nakedness. Margaret left little undone in her efforts. From this evidence a witness "wyttis her and suspects her of his skaith." Besides his own illness he attributed to her the fact that his cat and dog ran "wood." [3]

2. *Control of the Winds.*—Control of the winds has been professed by magicians of all nations. The witches' alliance with King Aeolus was seen in the fearful tempests that sometimes arose at the time of their death. It was said that between the time of the demise and the funeral of Mammie Scott, the Stromness witch, a terrific gale swept the coast. This control of nature was manifested in two ways. First of all it appeared in the witch's action in raising the wind. A favourable breeze was often desired by mariners. The witch by her magical art was enabled to gratify that desire. In Scotland, as in New Guinea,[4] the wind was raised by striking a stone. Isobel Gowdie explained to her judges the method the Auldearn witches adopted. "When we raise the wind, we take a rag of cloth and wet it in water, and we take a beetle [i.e. a piece of flattened wood which women use for beating clothes in cleaning them], and knock the rag on a stone and say thrice over :—

I knock this rag upon this stane
To raise the wind in the devil's name.
It shall not lie [i.e. be allayed] till I please again.

[1] J. Ramsay, Scotland and Scotsmen, II, 454 f.
[2] Caledonian Medical Journal, III (1901), 396.
[3] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 142 f.
[4] Frazer, Magic Art, I, 322.

When we would lay the wind, we dry the rag and say (thrice over) :—

> We lay the wind in the devil's name
> It shall not rise till we like to raise it again." [1]

An Orkney witch, Catherine Craigie, promised a Rousay woman favourable weather for her husband's return from Westray, where he was detained by storms and gales. On receiving a douceur, the weather became fair.[2] The belief in the witch's power over the elements was one of the last to die. In the coast towns and villages, throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century, sailors were wont to secure a favourable breeze from some aged beldame before they essayed a voyage. At Stromness, in 1814, there was one such, by name Bessie Miller, who traded in winds. Sir Walter Scott gives a vivid picture of this noted character, who was but a type of her kind: "He was a venturous master of a vessel who left the roadstead of Stromness without paying his offering to propitiate Bessie Miller: her fee was extremely moderate, being exactly sixpence, for which, as she explained herself, she boiled her kettle, and gave the bark advantage of her prayers. . . . The woman's dwelling and appearance were not unbecoming her pretensions: her house, which was on the brow of the steep hill on which Stromness is founded, was only accessible by a series of dirty and precipitous lanes, and for exposure might have been the abode of Aeolus himself, in whose commodities the inhabitant dealt. She herself was, as she told us, nearly a hundred years old, withered and dried up like a mummy. A clay coloured handkerchief folded round her head corresponded in colour to her corpse-like complexion. Two light blue eyes that gleamed, with a lustre like that of insanity, an utterance of astonishing rapidity, a nose and chin that almost met together, and a ghastly expression of cunning, gave her the effect of Hecate." [3] Bessie later retired to one of the islands. Her chief customers were the whalers to whom she sold amulets of various kinds as preservatives from the gales during their arduous voyage. If she could not always ensure favourable winds in Arctic regions, she could at least furnish them with charms that would guarantee their safety.[4]

[1] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 607.
[2] Register of P.C. of Scotland, 2nd series, VIII, 65 ff.
[3] Scott, Pirate, note G. [4] County Folk-Lore, III (O. and S.), 50.

Stonehaven, even at a later period, had its merchant of winds. The wise seaman would not venture out of harbour without making a moderate payment to an aged dame who lived in the old town.[1] Sometimes there was more than magic in the efforts to secure a moderate breeze. One man in Stonehaven, when a gale was blowing was wont to throw his cap into the air, explaining, "She maun hae something." It was an offering to the spirit of the air—a propitiatory sacrifice.

A usual means employed by the witch to provide a favouring breeze was to sell a thread, often a red thread. On the thread she tied three knots, muttering an incantation as she secured each knot. The thread was given to the sailor in return for a small recompense, with the injunction that if he wished a light wind he should undo the first knot, if he desired a stronger breeze, he must unloose the second, but on no account was he to untie the third. Many stories are told of the captains of vessels, who purchased a thread or twine from Mammie Scott, the Stromness witch, and whose curiosity as they neared their home ports overcame their prudence. They undid the third knot almost to their own undoing. A Portessie fisherman got a piece of twine from a wise woman with three knots upon it. One knot was to be loosed when the sail was hoisted. The second was to be loosened later to freshen the wind. On no account was he to loosen the third. But it fell calm, and no sooner had he untied the third than a great storm arose and he hardly escaped with his life.[2]

The same story of the three knots and the effect of unloosening them is found in North German traditions,[3] where the instrument was a cloth with three knots, and amongst the Finns and Laplanders where the knots were cast on a leathern thong.[4] The idea was that with the undoing of each knot more power is let loose. With the third knot untied, the tempests blow with the utmost fury.

The last resident spae-wife in Peterhead was Ann Silver. The following lines reveal a waning faith :—

> An Silver says we'll a' be nip'd
> And wont get out the morn,
> But we'll nail the horse-shoe to the mast
> And let her blow her horn.[5]

[1] Mackinlay, Folk-Lore, 221.
[2] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal (1861), IV, 9.
[3] Thorpe, *op. cit.*, III, 23 f.
[4] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, 251.
[5] S.N. and Q., IV (1890), 95.

If faith in the witch's power had diminished, there was no lack of faith in iron as a trusty shield. Against every foe the horse-shoe was a safeguard.

A wind might sometimes be desired on land, e.g. to winnow corn. In the old days a breeze was essential to accomplishing this task. Here, again, the witch's powers were turned to a beneficent purpose. When certain of her customers applied to Jonet Wishart for malt and she had none to sell, she bade them wait till she had got some winnowed. As there was no wind, she set to work to raise a breeze. She took a coal of fire and divided it. The one half she put in the one door of the barn, and the other half in the other door. She then said her orison and there rose the needed wind.[1]

The second way in which the witch exhibited her control over the winds was in stilling a tempest. She could not only raise a wind, but she could allay it. Gowdie gave the formula employed by the Auldearn coven for this purpose. Isobel Og laid the wind by employing a beetle, the same piece of wood as her Auldearn sister used in raising the wind. She was charged with making it calm and quiet, a special point taught her by her master, the devil. This she did in the Cragton of Lumphanan, taking a beetle and hanging it up by a thread and whispering her devilish orisons for a while. Then the wind that was so vehement that no man could hold his feet became calm and low.[2]

Even after the witches had ceased to practise their art, it was not entirely lost, for some of their arts still continued to be employed amongst the fisher folks. Two of these, based on imitative magic, were employed till recently. One was called "soothing the waves," and was resorted to by Cromarty fishermen. When beating up against stormy weather "it was customary for one of the men to take his place on the weather gunwale, and there continue waving his hand in a direction opposite to the sweep of the sea, in the belief that this species of appeal to it would induce it to lessen its force."[3] In Orkney, when a boat was leaving port and the wind ahead, the wife turned her petticoat in order to turn the wind round. The same rite was observed if the boats were expected home from the whale fishing or from

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 91. [2] *Ibid.*, 151.
[3] Ellen Guthrie, Folk-Lore Journal, VII (1889), 47.

a foreign voyage, and the wind was against them. Sweethearts used to turn their petticoats and go down to the sea and sing—

> O blaw, ye winds, sae fair and free
> Back, back my ain dear lad to me:
> It's—for his name I daurna tell—
> But bring him back I lo'e so well.[1]

Another instance of imitative magic in relation to the elements was the old charm for making rain—the witch went to a stream or pool and threw up water in the devil's name.

3. *Healing.*—Of all the beneficent rites of which the witch was mistress and of all the beneficent arts which she practised, those associated with healing were *facile princeps.* But her good works were not reckoned to her for righteousness. As having conference with the devil, and as producing her curative effects by diabolic means, she came under the ban of the Church. It was "unwarrantable healing," and those who practised the art were called "charmers," a name that applied equally to those who injured mankind. Sometimes the witch-doctor was regarded as antagonistic to the witch, but both arts might be exercised by the same person. The witch who cast the evil spell might remove it. Jonet Wishart by her witchcraft brought fever upon Alexander Thomson, mariner. Under threat of being burned, she sent by his wife certain "beare and wther droiggis to drink." After this he daily improved, and soon was restored to his usual health.[2] James Ailhous, suffering from the same alternating burning heat and cold sweat, was compelled to send to Bervie for another witch who came and removed Jonet's witchcraft from him.[3] It seems as if it were only under dire compulsion that the witch undid her own work. Marion Moir, in Birsay, threatened Marion Comlaquoy that she should cause her to be burned, if her cow died. The animal recovered that night.[4] Only, when in fear of the extreme penalty, did the sorceress remove the spell from any creature she had bewitched. Usually the victim had to resort to another member of the sisterhood to get relief. Katherine Gerrard bewitched the Mill of Fedderate. She could not unwitch it herself, "but it behoved

[1] Laing, Superstitions, 73.
[2] *Ibid.*, 87.
[3] Sp. Misc., I, 85.
[4] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, 109.

another witch to take it off, for she could not take off the witch-craft which she cast on." [1]

In the church records, instances of unwarrantable healing constantly occur. At Aberdeen, in 1630, James Hall, Cordoner, was brought to the penitential stool for seeking help and relief of fevers by charming.[2] In 1639 Andrew Young and his daughter were cited for consulting a sorcerer "anent the curing and charming of the late Isobel Aiken, sometime spouse to the said Andrew." [3] It seems in this case the sorcerer's charms were ineffectual. That is why her efforts came to light. The records of Strathbogie reveal a practitioner of twenty years' standing in Cairney. In 1632, Isobel Malcolm confessed she had used charming these twenty years, and in particular that she charmed two gentlewomen (whom she named) for the " bairne bed," and also a child's sore eye in Bade within the Parish of Ruthven.[4] Cattle often required the services of the witch-doctor. In the exercise of Alford in 1669, several offenders from Towie and Strathdon were reported for the scandal of " charming and curing cattle by unwarrantable means." [5]

The practice of healing " unwarrantably " was so widespread that Presbyteries were at their wits' ends to know how to deal with culprits. The elders of the kirk, as well as the ordinary members, were everywhere resorting to sorcerers when their households or their herds were attacked by disease. Strathbogie Presbytery was in travail. At the Synod of Moray in 1637, the brethren of that Presbytery reported that there were sundry charmers within their bounds, and asked counsel how to deal with them.[6] At the meeting of Synod in 1672 the question again arose concerning charmers in Strathbogie, " using spells and other heathenish superstitions, expressions and practices over sick persons for their recovery." Inquiry was made what should be the censure of such as practised the said black art, and also of those who employed them.[7] These charmers had obtained a tremendous hold on the common folks. In their pharmacopœia were herbal remedies which were efficacious in many cases: they associated with their healing potions and unguents various

[1] Sp. Misc., I. 173.
[2] Stuart, Selections, 111.
[3] *Ibid.*, 113.
[4] Presbytery Book of Strathbogie, 5.
[5] Records of Exercise of Alford, 143.
[6] Cramond, Extracts from Syn. of Mor., 41.
[7] *Ibid.*, 153.

ritual tags and signs which vastly impressed the ignorant and superstitious. Sometimes recovery ensued: the failures, that are not concealed in the church records, would be attributed to the omission of some ceremonial act.

The witch-doctor was the lineal successor of the charmer. His function, however, was limited to the beneficent side of the witch's activity. Adam Donald, the prophet of Bethelnie, was typical of his class. His mother, a cottar's wife, gave birth to a fine boy in 1703, but the "gweed neebors" carried off the child to elfland and left in his place a changeling, a sallow misshapen creature, utterly unlike other children. As he grew to manhood, he used to visit the churchyard and hold converse with the departed spirits, from whom he gained much hidden knowledge. He was chiefly consulted in the case of lingering illnesses, which were believed to be due to witchcraft. Such was his reputation, that invalids and others travelled distances of forty or fifty miles to secure the benefit of his knowledge and skill. For a fee of sixpence, the same as charged by Bessie Miller of Stromness, the pilgrim achieved his desire.[1] A witch-doctor of great repute in the Buchan district and beyond was a farmer—Forman by name, but better known as Auld Sawtie. Like Adam Donald he was often consulted in regard to the detection of thieves, as well as resorted to for his healing powers. Shrewd, as all his kind were, and always listening in, he had a special means of finding out the private affairs of his clients or patients. He had a concealed closet where he overheard the conversation, while his wife examined the visitor in the adjoining sitting-room. Accordingly, he appeared very knowing when at length he interviewed those seeking his aid.[2]

Peter Buchan, writing in 1819, said he knew two people in the neighbourhood of Peterhead who could cure disease, reveal secrets, and make the dead forsake their graves. One was a middle-aged man acquainted "with farriery and some of the occult sciences and dealt in destiny's dark counsels." The other was an aged and withered woman, a disciple of Adam Donald, who lived in a hovel in a lonesome glen. Many were the spells she employed to ensure success in worldly pursuits and to protect

[1] Alexander, Northern Rural Life, 193 ff.
[2] Milne, Myths, 11 f., 36 f.; Murray, Peterhead a Century Ago, 68.

from evil.[1] At a time when superstitious belief in the supernatural constituted the sum and substance of the religion of many, anyone desiring to impose on their credulity found ready victims. A certain low cunning, some understanding of cause and effect, combined with physical peculiarities, such as a squint eye, or a shrunken frame, proved the witch or warlock's chief qualifications.

While healing by unwarrantable means was banned by the Church, what may be termed magical healing by touch was rather encouraged, when the operator was his most sacred Majesty. In 1683 Marjory Gray in Grange, Banffshire, being "to go up to London for seeking remedy to her disease, supposed to be King's Evil, got a certificat, declaring her to be free of church censure and public scandal."[2] The reference here is to the belief that the king had power to cure scrofula, a belief that was widely held, and was a survival from that remote period when the chief of a tribe and the medicine man were one and the same. Great virtue flowed from the chief. When Dr. Johnson visited Skye, it was believed that the return of the chief of the Macleods to Dunvegan after any considerable absence, resulted in a plentiful supply of herring—the greatest boon the islesmen could conceive.[3] Merely by touch the royal hand could cure the scrofulous. Queen Elizabeth exercised this remarkable power. On Midsummer Day, 24th June, 1633, Charles I cured 100 patients at Holyrood by his royal touch in the chapel there. Charles II is said to have touched nearly 100,000 persons for this disease. One wonders if Marjory Gray from Grange was one of them. The ceremony is thus described by Evelyn: "His Majesty began first to *touch for the evil!* according to custom, thus: His Majesty sitting under his state in the Banqueting House, the chirurgeons cause the sick to be brought, or led up, to the throne, where, they kneeling, the King strokes their faces or cheeks with both his hands at once, at which instant a chaplain in his formalities says, 'He put his hands upon them and healed them.' This is said to everyone in part'. When they have been all touched, they come up again in the same order, and the other chaplain, kneeling, and having angel gold strung on white ribbon on his arms, delivers them one by one to his Majesty, who puts them about the

[1] Annals of Peterhead, 72. [2] Cramond, Grange, 27 f.
[3] A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland, 157.

necks of the touched as they pass, whilst the first chaplain repeats, 'This is the true light who came into the world.' Then follows an epistle (as at first a Gospel) with the liturgy, prayers for the sick, with some alteration; lastly the blessing: and then the Lord Chamberlain and the Comptroller of the Household bring a basin, ewer and towel, for his Majesty to wash."[1] Angel gold were gold coins with the figure of an angel stamped upon them. It is said that one Avise Evans availed himself of the opportunity of rubbing his fungus nose with the hand of this king.[2] The practice did not stop with Charles. Dr. Johnson in childhood was touched by Queen Anne. Dr. Gordon states that the power departed from the sovereigns when the Hanoverian dynasty came to the throne and the healing was no longer attempted. According to him, the Jacobites averred that the virtue remained with the Stuarts.[3] This is hardly consistent with what Miss Sheila Macdonald tells of an old shepherd in the Highlands. He often bewailed his inability to get within reach of the late Queen Victoria. He was convinced that the royal touch would cure his infirmity.[4] In the eyes of the Church this healing was not regarded as the result of alliance with Satan. Rather was it divine healing, resulting from the touch of the Lord's anointed. The Grange Kirk Session, while discouraging all traffickers in the black art, bade Marjory Gray God-speed as she set forth on her long journey to seek the royal touch.

Many of the means employed to procure healing were the same as those used in inflicting injury or disease. They were but instruments, and whether they were to produce a beneficent or baleful effect, depended on the power, good or evil, the witch imparted to them.

(*a*) Some of the healing charms consisted of a form of words, usually arranged in metrical form by the sorcerers and recited over the patient. Many of them concluded in the names of the Trinity and some of the apostles. It gave a Christian colouring to a primitive rite. Andro Man of Rathven, amongst the many charms he employed, used a spell that long survived in the North. He says he can heal the falling sickness, barne bed, and all other

[1] The Diary of John Evelyn, II, 148 f., London, 1906. The service for healing by the king's touch appeared in the Prayer Book up to 1719.

[2] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, 66. [3] J.F.S.G. in S.N. and Q., 2nd series, III, 122.

[4] Old World Survivals in Ross-shire Folk-Lore, XIV (1903), 372.

sickness to man and beast, except "stane deid," by baptising them "reabling thame in the auld corunschbald and stricking of the gudis in the face with ane foull in thy hand and by saying thir words, 'Gif thow will leiff, leiff, and gif thow will die, die.'" [1] The fowl was associated with witchcraft as a disease bearer, but the essence of the spell seems to lie in the ancient form of words he employs. Isobel Gowdie gave a comprehensive charm for the fevers.[2] It was not unlike that employed by Wm. Kerow in Elgin in 1623, which was as follows :—

> The quaquand fewer and the trembling fewer
> And the sea fewer and the land fewer,
> Bot and the head fewer and the hart fewer,
> And all the feweris that God creatit.
> In Sanct Johnes name, Sanct Peteris name,
> And all the sancts of heavin's name
> Our Lord Jesus Crystis name.[3]

Even the name of a person was sometimes regarded as sufficient for the sorcerer if he wished to do injury, or to bring blessing. Martin bears this testimony in regard to a case of hæmorrhage in the Orkney Islands. The name of the patient was sent to the charmer, along with an incantation. He employed the charm with some more words. After repeating these, the bleeding stopped. The cure might be effected, though the patient was miles distant from the operator.[4]

Sometimes it was asserted that the healing came by prayer to the devil, which was another way of describing their words of disenchantment. At the trial of Jonet Rendall in Orkney in 1629, it was stated that "having gotten the silver, ye healed the horse by praying to your walliman." [5] Again, the spoken charm might be accompanied by touch. On 20th July, 1650, before the Turriff Presbytery, James Reburn in Alvah confessed he had learned a charm from his mother who had died some twenty years before. He employed the following words, and laid his hands upon the shoulder of the person to be healed: "I charm thee for the head fewers, the heart fewers, the liver fewers, the nerve fewers, the lung fewers, in the name of the father, the son

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 119 f. [2] See p. 224.
[3] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 182.
[4] Martin, Western Isles, 692.
[5] County Folk-Lore, III (O. and S.), 107.

and the holie ghost." [1] There is a sameness about these verbal charms.

(*b*) A charm, instead of being spoken, might be inscribed on a piece of paper and carried about the person as a curative agent. A well-known Scripture charm for the toothache continued to be employed in some districts as late as the middle of the nineteenth century, and probably with as beneficent results as the more modern toothache cures. The toothache was often called the "worm"—it was believed to be due to a worm at the root of the tooth.[2] Brand, in his description of Orkney, tells of the employment of a charm for this distressing ailment, when there fell a living worm out of the patient's mouth at supper, at the very moment when the charm was being performed by the charmer.[3]

The words of the written charm were these: "Petter was laying and his head upon a marrable ston weping and Christ came by and said what else thou, Petter. Petter answered and sad—Lord God my twoth. Raise thou, Petter and be healed, and whosoever sall carry these lines in my name shall never feel the two thick. Kett M'Aulay." These words were inscribed on a piece of paper eight inches long by two and a half inches broad. The charm was written and sold by a professional witch, Kate M'Aulay, at Kishorn, Loch Carron, in 1855. It was folded small and worn in a small silk bag suspended from the neck of a shepherd who had given half-a-crown to the witch for the charm. It would lose its efficacy if looked at.[4] This is a charm that was known all over the country. The form here given betrays a great difficulty in writing and is less polished than the more usual forms.[5]

(*c*) Herbal charms formed a chief constituent in the witch's repertory. Here she showed much wisdom. A long experience had taught the witch covens what herbs possessed the greatest healing virtue. That experience was pooled at their meetings, and even when these were broken up, the secrets of their art were handed on from one witch to another. It was a branch of

[1] Brebner, In Turriff Presbytery.
[2] Gregor, Notes, 48.
[3] Brand, Orkney and Shetland, V, 763, in Pinkerton, III
[4] Folk-Lore, XV (1904), 350.
[5] Gregor, Notes, 48; Henderson, Folk-Lore, 172; J. G. Campbell, Witchcraft, 69.

their craft that did not necessarily bring them before the authorities. It could be pursued in secret. Grateful patients would not wish to expose their benefactors. In 1596 Isobel Thomson, alias Preinak, in Elgin, was charged with making a plaster to a sick bairn of "sawine, rossat, walx, blak pepper and caramell and leyd the same to the barne." She also washed the child with a black clout.[1] On another occasion Preinak advised a mixture of honey, vinegar and butter "to put about" a sick bairn.[2] Isobel Cockie of Kintore in a fever case gave the patient a drink mixed with shorn herbs, which she mixed with butter and saffron. She gave him three drinks, then took a green thread with knots on it and blew upon it. Part of the thread she then put round his body "under his oxteris," part into the fire. Finally she washed him in south-running water, brought by his wife unspoken.[3] This embraces many of the most distinctive features of the witch's art, the herbal potion, the thread, the water. Katherine Fergus admitted that "for the barne bed she gave the fever fuilyis, the red netill, seige and wabroun leaff." The leaves of many of the herbs provided a healing draught and the roots were made into a healing "saw." Till quite recently, in parts of the North-East, ointments continued to be made from the roots of some common herbs.

(*d*) Threads were employed by the witch not only to injure but also to heal. Isobel Cockie, along with the drink she prepared, employed a green thread with knots upon it.[4] Green thread was also employed as a charm to make cloth to sell. At Banchory market, Isobel Ogg, in Blelack, "put her devil's mark on cloth with a piece of green thread which had sewed before a winding sheet."[5] The result was that the cloth was the first sold.

Instead of a thread, Isobel Gowdie employed a feather as a spell to secure a ready market. When her husband sold beef, she used to put a swallow's feather in the hide of the beast and said thrice :—

> I put owt this beef in the devil's name,
> That meikle silver and good price come hame.

[1] Cramond, Records of Kirk Session of Elgin, 29.
[2] *Ibid.*, 45.
[3] Sp. Misc., I, 115.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*, 152.

She always inserted a feather when selling horses, cattle, webs of cloth or anything else.[1] A feather that might be wafted on the wind readily lent itself to the magical art. Threads, however, were the usual weapons in the witch's hands. Sometimes a red thread was employed. Isobel Ritchie received a stick with " certane reid birssie yarne thairone," and thus by witchcraft relieved Elspet Forbes of her illness.[2] Threads of varied colours were also powerful in accomplishing the witch's purpose. Walter Ronaldson used to strike his wife. She consulted Scudder, the witch, who took pieces of paper, sewed them with threads of divers colours, and put them in the barn among the corn. The charm operated at once. There was no more wife beating; in fact Walter never found fault with his wife whatever she did, though she was " ane westour." [3] The divers colours appeared in a charm employed by Jonet Wishart in unwitching ale. It consisted of a " piece of cloth four neukit, with green, red and blue and three corss of clewir girss " thrown into the fire.[4]

A (w)resting thread was also found in the equipment of the witches. This was a thread spun from black wool, on which were cast nine knots and which was then tied round the affected part. A man, in Yell, Shetland, had fever, and could not sleep. Barbara Stood in Delting gave him a resting thread which had to be wound about his head nine nights and then burned. This secured him rest.[5] In Shetland when a person received a sprain it was customary to apply to one practised in casting the " wresting thread." This thread was tied around the sprained leg or arm. During the time the wise man was putting it round, he repeated to himself :—

The Lord rade
And the foal slade
He lighted
And he righted
Set joint to joint
Bone to bone
And sinew to sinew,
Heal in the Holy Ghost's name.[6]

The last part of the charm is very old. A variant is found in Germany and Norway.[7] The first part is a later addition. The

[1] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 608.
[2] Sp. Misc., I, 141.
[3] *Ibid.*, 177.
[4] *Ibid.*, 91.
[5] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, 118 f.
[6] N.S.A., Shetland, 141.
[7] Thorpe, *op. cit.*, I, 23.

original rune operated by its own inherent force. No God was invoked.

Black wool had great healing virtue. Andro Man, who had an extensive repertory, gave "black woll and salt as a remeid for all diseases, and for causing a man to prosper, and that his bluid suld never be drawn." [1] This continued for long to be a favourite remedy. When the author of "Darker Superstitions" was recovering from a dangerous fever in 1826, a relative presented him with some black wool to put in his ears to preserve him from becoming deaf.[2]

Anything manufactured of wool had equal potency. A woollen stocking was a charm always ready to hand. At Ellon, in 1603, compeared Janet Kay, servant to the lady of Auchmacoy, charged with sending in the Laird's name to the Laird of Arnage younger, and "ten out a pairt of his hois privily to put about a bairn's neck, sick of the kink host." She acknowledged her offence.[3] A hose and a thread might be combined. At Old Machar, in 1681, Jean Nimbrie confessed she cured Helen Collie by taking a hose and tying a thread about it, then putting the hose about the said Helen. She said these words: "The Lord Jesus Christ by the sea rode and the fevers on his side and buried them in a grave in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost." [4] The charmer here had got hold of the opening words of the spell employed with the resting thread. A more detailed account of the modus operandi is given by Historicus in the Viking Club Miscellany.[5] At Canisbay a married woman was accused of witchcraft. One of the charges against her was that she took a stocking, a horn spoon and unscoured woollen thread. She laid the stocking upon a stool and some of the yarn upon it and set the patient thereon. She took the rest of the thread and wrapped it about several parts of his body. She tied the end of the thread to the crook, holding the crook by her hand, muttering some unintelligible words. Then she raised the patient from the stool. If the spoon which was on the outside of the stocking was now inside it, and the thread which was within was now wrapt about the outside, she reckoned the cure performed.

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 119 f.
[2] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, 115.
[3] Mair, Narratives of Ellon, 44.
[4] Munro, Records of Old Aberdeen, II, 75.
[5] Vol. II, 114 f.

(*e*) The "meels," sometimes "meildis," was another of the charms which might be employed for good or ill. Jonet Cumming of Elgin, in 1594, invoked by the nurse of a sick child, came to the house by night, bringing water with her in a "pig" and washed the bairn therewith. She bade the nurse go to the place of the kirk where Grissell Urellis' first child was buried and there, unspoken, take up a handful of "meildis," and bring the same to Jonet that she might put them among the water with which she washed the child. This the nurse did: and then at Jonet's behest, carried the charmed water to the running water of Lossie, and emptied it therein, so that none should get hurt thereby.[1] The disease had passed to the water. In Shetland, a pain in the side was cured by an application of mould dug from a grave and heated in a saucepan. It had to be taken from the grave, and returned to it, after sunset. A charm of this nature was always taboo. Under the direction of the witch it might restore health, but apart from her, contact with it was dangerous.

From Foula, Shetland, comes what must be one of the last instances of the use of earth from the churchyard. A clergyman called at a cottage there and enquired after a poor woman dying of consumption. He asked if they had used means to help recovery. "Yah," said her aged mother, "we gaed to the kirkyard and brought mould frae the grave o' the last body buried, an' laid it on her breast. As this had nae effect, we gaed to the brig ower which the last corpse was ta'en an' took some water frae the burn below an' made her drink it. This failed too, an' as a last resource we dug a muckle hole i' the ground an' put her in't."[2]

The "meels" were not only a life-giving spell, but they might also be employed to bring prosperity. Isobel Trail in Grange confessed to the Presbytery that she consulted Walker, the witch, who bade her take "ane moldewort hillock (i.e. moleheap) and muild out of the churchyard and putt it vnder hir gait twys and that wold mack hir aill to sell."[3] The muilds under her doorway appear to have acted as a charm to keep evil spirits away.

Kin to the use of the "meels" was the use of water in which

[1] Cramond, Elgin, 23.
[2] Reid, 22 f. (1869), quoted in County Folk-Lore, III (O. and S.), 151.
[3] Presbytery Book of Strathbogie. 5.

some part of a dead body had been washed. Scudder went to the Kirk of Dyce, gathered a number of bones, and washed them with water. This water she took and bathed Wm. Symmers in Fintray who was ill.[1] In Strathaven when cattle were attacked by the murrain and the needfire failed to stay the plague, the owner was told of one unfailing specific. Take the juice or bree of a dead head from the churchyard.[2] If we only knew the past of our country, we should doubtless find that once upon a time human flesh was employed as a charm to secure the prosperity of cattle and crops, just as among the Khonds of Bengal human sacrifices were offered for the fertility of the fields down to the middle of the nineteenth century.[3]

(*f*) A magic circle protected those inside from evil influence. James Ailhous, suffering from the effects of the black art, sent for a Bervie witch to remove the spell. She came and washed him in south-running water and "pat him throw ane girtht" with some other ceremonies. The witch received sixteen marks for her services. The patient was restored to health.[4] John Philp, the Banff magician, charmed Gilbert Leslie in the parish of Fintray by putting him through a hesp of yarn. He also confessed employing this method to cure cattle. He charmed Thomas Byth's oxen with hesps of yarn.[5] In Morayshire, children suffering from hectic fever or consumption were passed through a circular wreath of woodbine, cut during the increase of the March moon. Dorothy Calder, the Forres witch, encircled some salmon fishers of Findhorn with a knotted straw rope, muttering all the while an old spell.[6]

The hole, through which a suppliant was put, might be made of stone. The passage of the matron through the Kelpie's stone at Dinnet brought special virtue.[7] In the Brahan wood, there are two boulders which lean against each other, meeting at the top. A few years ago an old woman aged 84 died near Dingwall. When a child she had a fit, believed by her parents to be epileptic. They lighted a fire at the top of the leaning stones and passed the child through the opening below.[8] The circle in the stone not

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 180.
[2] Campbell, Superstitions, 60 f.
[3] Frazer, Spirit of Corn, I, 248.
[4] Sp. Misc., I, 87.
[5] Register of Privy Council, 2nd series, IV, 637 f.
[6] Cameron, *op. cit.*, 99.
[7] See p. 79.
[8] Folk-Lore, 29 (1918), 86.

only bestowed fertilising and healing virtue to those who passed through it, but it also gave augury as to the future. In 1656, at a meeting of the Presbytery of Dingwall, amongst other enormities of the inhabitants of Applecross and Loch Carron, it was reported that there was a hole in a round stone which was frequented by those about to take a journey. If they could put their head through it, they looked for a happy home-coming: if they failed to insert their heads in the hole, it augured ill for their return.[1]

The transmission through a hesp of yarn, a girdle, or a circular stone was symbolical of a new birth, a new life. The old troubles were left behind. Sometimes virtue might attach to the stone itself, but passing through the magic circle was sufficient to enable one to enter upon new life and prosperity. "Sanctified girdles for relieving the pains of labour or for accelerating parturition are said to have been kept by many Scottish families until nearly the middle of the eighteenth century." [2]

(*g*) Ablution of the diseased was a common way of cure. Marion Grant washed James Cheyne with south-running water. At her trial she confessed she could cure sick cattle by saying an oration to them and by casting south-running water over them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and Chryst Sonday.[3] Philp of Banff cured a man with this water which he warmed. He then washed the patient.[4] This cure was for long resorted to in Aberdeenshire. At Boganore, near Loch Kinnord, there lived William M'Pherson, a mechanic of great skill and of decided strength of character and intelligence. He possessed an excellent collection of antiques. A stirk of his took ill. What was to be done? "There's a cure," said William to his brother, "We'll gie er a draucht o' the dead water. Ye'll tak a three girdit cog, an ging for water i' the gloamin oot aneath far the leevan an the deed cross, an' ye mauna speak nor be spoken to b' onybody gaun nor comin', an' if we get er t' tak that, I think she'll be a richt. Bit, I'll maybe better ging for the water mysel." William went. The stirk smelt the water as they whispered about her. Then she took a drink, threw up her tail and heels and made for home. "The spell's broken," exclaimed her

[1] Mackay, Records of Inverness, 279 f.
[2] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, 135.
[3] Sp. Misc., I, 171.
[4] Register of Privy Council, 2nd series, V, 565.

owner in a tone of relief.[1] Here the belief in the virtue of the "dead water" persisted amongst the intelligent members of the community till the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The employment of this water, which appears in association with various charms, was regulated by three conditions. First, it must be taken from a stream over which the dead are carried to the churchyard and the living pass to their daily duty. In 1604, evidence was given before Aberdeen Kirk Session in regard to Helen Gibb. On the Tuesday or Friday before Barthol day in 1603, she passed to the spout of the Nethermill of the burgh and there "with a chopin stoup keapit three sundry drops of water out of the spout and immediately thereafter passed to the fluid besides the Trinity kirkyard with a chopin stoup, and filled the same full of the fluid waters and cast the same immediately thereafter in the first cauldron among her burne [i.e. water used in brewing] and then maskit her fatt [i.e. infused her barrel]." In the neighbourhood of the burgh it might not always be easy to get a single stream over which both living and dead pass.[2] Sometimes the restriction was to water from a south-running stream. It possessed equal virtue.

Secondly, the water must be brought unspoken. The bearer must keep silence, and sometimes there was the further condition that none must speak to him or her. To ensure that these conditions would be fulfilled, there is evidence that occasionally there was a companion with the water carrier. This companion would ensure silence. This is an old restriction. It appears in the Old Testament: "Then he said to Gehazi, 'Gird up thy loins and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not: and if any salute thee, answer him not again, and lay my staff upon the face of the child.'"[3] The original idea is the same: there must be no delay in bringing the healing water.

Thirdly, certain precautions must be taken in disposing of the water after it had been used. It had now become impregnated with the disease which it had cured. It must therefore be poured out in some place where none could be infected by coming in contact with it. Usually it was returned to the stream from which it was taken.

[1] *Aberdeen Journal*, Notes and Queries, III, 191 f.
[2] Stuart, Selections from Records, 39. [3] 2 Kings iv. 29.

These ablutions did not always have a beneficial effect. Amongst the charges against John Philp, the Banff witch, was that of washing Alexander Gifford in Alvah in a manner he was taught by the devil. In his confession Philp said he knew that his washings and the waters he used had done great evil.[1]

(*h*) Various metals were in constant use for protecting and healing. The silver water was a recognised cure. About 1860 an Inverness man took ill in Tain. His landlady, ascribing his illness to the evil eye, partially undressed him and laid him on a table. She then took a common wooden pail, filled with water, to which she added half-a-crown, a shilling and a sixpence. She stirred the water with a stick, going round the pail as she did so, and muttering an incantation. Then she washed the man with the enchanted water.[2] About the same period a farmer who chanced to be in Portgordon village, Banffshire, was asked to visit and prescribe for a sick cow belonging to one of the villagers. He asked if anything had been tried in the way of cure. "Oo aye," said the woman, "A ga ir a drink aff a new shillin' yesterday in A think she's been some better sin seen."[3] The silver water was effectual in the case of both man and beast. If the shilling or sixpence stuck to the rim of the vessel held bottom upwards, it was an unfavourable omen. If the sickness was natural, it would pass away by the use of the silver water and recital of the charm.[4]

Lead was often employed to heal but in a different way. In the simplest form it was melted and poured through a key or the bowl of scissors into a vessel filled with cold water. This vessel was placed upon the patient's head. If he suffered from heart trouble, much virtue ensued if the lead, as it dropped, formed in the shape of a heart in the water. In the Fraserburgh records (by Rev. P. Milne) "Agnes Duff tuik leid and meltit it and pat on ane sieve on the bairnes heid, and ane coig with watter in the sieve, and ane scheir abein the cog, and the leid was put in through the boull of the scheir among the water."[5] Ascertainment of its nature and the cure of the disease went hand in hand. Orkney provides the same method of divination and

[1] Register of Privy Council, 2nd series, IV, 637 ff.
[2] Frazer, Northern Folk-Lore, 7. [3] Gregor, Notes, 187.
[4] Alex. Macdonald, Song and Story from Loch Ness Side, 141.
[5] Cranna, Fraserburgh, 192.

healing. A like charm was employed by Jonet Reid upon a child of Alexander Linklater's.[1] Mr. Cranna, Fraserburgh, says it has been practised in recent years in a fishing town on the Moray Firth. There is an account of casting the heart in lead at Elgin. In 1734 Duncan Gregor confessed to the session that he cured fevers in the following manner: "He ran some lead on the head of the distressed person, poured it into cold water, saying, 'Rise up, heart, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost,' and if the fevers lay not about the heart, the lead rose up in the water in the form of the heart of a fowl, and so the person was cured, but if the fevers lay about the heart, the lead appeared in another shape, and to carry off the disease, he did cast it again, and by degrees the disease wore off."[2] The latter part of this charm indicates the usual method of procedure, when it was the heart that was affected. When the lead formed in other shapes than that of a heart, the operator continued till by and by he believed he saw in the water something which resembled a heart. During the process the healing work was going on: when he found a figure shaped like a heart, the cure was completed. A Shetland correspondent of the *John o' Groats Journal* of 1847 says: "A few days previously, 'Auld Eliza' went to a distant part of the Isles to cast a young man's heart. Two hundred and sixty times did she try but failed, till at last the wearied youth, who had been obliged to sit for several days in a large kettle, on old clouts over a slow fire, while the melted lead had been poured, got impatient and resolved to suffer the 'heart wearing' rather than endure the attempted cure according to custom."[3]

This method of healing was known in Sweden. Three kinds of lead, church lead, cloth lead (i.e. from cloth stamps) and common lead, were all melted together and poured over a pair of shears which were opened out in the form of a cross, and laid across a bowl of water. The resemblance stops here. Whatever figure the lead formed had to be wrapped up in linen and laid under the sick person's pillow so that he might sleep on it overnight.[4] An Arab cure for melancholia caused by love is to put

[1] County Folk-Lore, III (O. and S.), 102.
[2] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 335.
[3] *Aberdeen Journal*, Notes and Queries, IV (1911), 113.
[4] Fra Eva Wigström, quoted by Craigie, Scandinavian Folk-Lore, 433.

a dish of water on the sufferer's head, drop melted lead in it and then bury the lead in an open field. The disease passes and recovery follows.[1] The essential acts in the Scottish charm seem to have been dropping the lead through the bowl of the scissors into water and keeping repeating this, till a figure resembling a heart appeared.

Iron in one form or another held a leading place. The dislike of evil spirits to iron rendered it a useful safeguard to man. When the Moray Firth fishermen were at sea, and one of them happened to take the name of God in vain, the first man who heard him called out "cauld airn." At this, every member of the crew grasped the nearest bit of iron and held it for a while till the danger passed. On land, when a death occurred, a needle or something of iron used to be stuck into the meal, butter, cheese, meat, and whisky to prevent evil attacking them. Unless this were done, corruption of the food would follow. Whisky was known to become white as milk.[2] The horse-shoe was the most familiar of such preservatives. Iron was also a noted remedy when sickness had actually befallen. Dr. Gregor describes a cure for rickets that long obtained. The child was taken to the smithy. A tub was filled with water, into which by plunging hot iron a temperature comfortable for a bath was raised. The blacksmith bathed the child in the water. Some of the water was also given it to drink.[3] The application of the impregnated water was both internal and external. The same method was employed in Lochaber, but an old woman and not the blacksmith was the operator. A smoothing iron was placed in the heart of a peat fire and then dipped, red hot, some half-dozen times into a bicker of water till it was warmed. The patient was made to drink about a pint of it. In less than five minutes all pain had vanished.[4] But a blacksmith or cutler was the properly accredited priest of the art. He worked in iron. Thomas Symond, cutler in Elgin, admitted he charmed bairns for the heart growing. In answer to questions Symond said, "Such as had sick bairns inquired for a smith to charm their bairn called a Schyre Smyth, that is to say a smith whose father, goodsire and grandsire were smyths and himself was one of them." A cutler, he said, was a "schyir" (shear) smith, and apart from

[1] Frazer, Scapegoat, 4.
[2] Gregor, Notes, 208.
[3] *Ibid.*, 45.
[4] Stewart, 'Twixt Ben Nevis and Glencoe, 8 f.

working in iron, the man who made the shears employed in so many charms, had a special connection with magical healing. Symond took a smith's hammer and tongs and sained the bairn with these words: "In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti."[1] The qualification of a smith having a smith for a father and grandfather also obtained in Orkney.[2]

Similar was the performance of Thomas Smyth in Coldwells, Ellon, a noted charmer. In cases of the falling sickness, when children were brought to him, he laid them naked on the study (i.e. anvil), and with his great forehammer drew and "mintit" three times to them on the study, saying these words three times: "Ather pair (get worse) or mend in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in God's name."[3]

The virtue attaching to the "cruik" was due, in the first place, to the material of which it was made. Its association with fire would add to its sanctity. In the early days, it would be the only fitting of the house made of metal. To keep chickens from dying, Helen Fraser, witch, bade them take all the chickens and young fowls and draw them through the link of the cruik and take the hindmost and slay with a burning stick. The cruik was also employed in various ceremonies designed to preserve the home from the attack of witches or evil spirits.

(*i*) Other instruments in the witches' hands for working weal were stones—sometimes "brunt" stones, frequently stones immersed in water. To burned stones were ascribed many of the virtues attributed to iron. Like iron, they impregnated the water and imparted to it magical powers. At Elgin, in 1650, Janet Hossack took some stones out of a burn where the quick and the dead passed over. She burned the stones and put them in water wherewith she washed the bairn. She cast the stones back into the stream and the child recovered.[4] This is the same ceremony as noted above, with stone substituted for iron. At one period, it may have been difficult to get iron. The rite may date back to the stone age. Its primitive character is suggested by other instances. After the best skill in Kirkwall failed to effect a cure in the case of Margaret Corstoun, Marable Cowper in Birsay took a brimstone stone and put it in the fire, and with

[1] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 96.
[2] Brand, Orkney, 62 f. [3] Mair, Narratives, 121.
[4] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 275.

it heated a drink of ale and gave Corstoun to drink, whereby she was restored to health.[1] Here the ale took the place of water: like the water, its temperature was raised by the brunt stones. In this case the liquid was drunk. The Orkney rite, in which the stone and ale in unison exercise healing virtue, suggests a like ceremonial observed in Norway. In certain hill districts the peasants used to preserve round stones, wash them every Thursday evening, and at certain times of the year steep them in ale that they might bring luck and comfort to the house.[2] The Orkney rite may have a Norse origin.

In this ritual, stones to which special virtue attached were also employed. In the North of Scotland many stones of virtue appear. These charm stones might be in the possession of one of the great families, as, for example, the Lee Penny. This suggested Sir Walter Scott's talisman. The stone itself is in the shape of a heart and of dark red colour, mounted on a silver coin. It was brought to this country by Simon Lockart of Lee, who went with Sir James Douglas to carry the heart of the Bruce to the Holy Land, and who secured this amulet from a Moorish princess. It acquired a more than national reputation for its marvellous virtues. The Clach na Bratach, or stone of the standard, is the talisman of the Clan Donnachaidh. It not only brought good luck, but also gave auguries as to the future. A curing stone was for long in possession of the Campbells of Glen Lyon. But in the North the most noted stones have probably been those employed by witch or warlock. John Rhind and his wife, in Elgin, were brought before the Kirk Session in 1661, charged with witchcraft. They wished to dissociate themselves from the use of a stone which was clearly much employed in curing cattle. John Rhind describes it as a "white stone." Norman Dunbar says it was "readish colourit," and was an inch thick and towards three inches long. Elspet Smith, Rhind's wife, said it was of a brownish colour and "of the quantitie of the thumbe of ane man." Its history is unknown save that Mrs. Rhind declared she received it from James MacFarquhar and Robert Grant in Abernethy, in pledge of a dollar, and after being in the Rhinds' possession for a year, it was returned to its original owners. It was a stone of

[1] Register of Privy Council, 2nd series, VIII, 357.
[2] Tylor, Primitive Culture, II, 153.

great virtue, before it was brought from such a distance. The method of cure was not different from that employed with other stones. In one of the instances Mrs. Rhind took a pint of whey and washed the stone in it. She then took a belt that had been round a dead body, put it about the ox and cast the whey upon it. She says the stone served for much good and not for any harm. A cow of John Anderson's was ill with the dry darn. He immersed the stone in water which he then gave the animal to drink. It recovered. Other instances of its healing virtue were given at the trial.[1]

The possessor of another famous charm stone was the renowned warlock of Strathavon, by name Grigor Willox. He settled near Tomintoul. His renown was such that his clients and patients came from all over the Northern Counties. Sometimes he might have to journey as far as the Spittal of Glenshee in the pursuit of his craft. According to one writer, he was arrayed in a scarlet coat when he went abroad. This helped to deepen, in the popular mind, the impression of his greatness. When the larder was bare, he would undertake a tour of the North. He was equipped for his work by two magical instruments. One was the Kelpie's bridle, which was said to have descended to him from a relative of the name of MacGregor. This relative, by artifice and the use of his good sword, secured it from the large black horse of Loch Ness, but the Parish minister of Kirkmichael says he used the bit off the bridle of the water horse of Loch Spioradan.[2] The bridle was a small brass hook which fell off the Kelpie's bridle in the encounter. This was a powerful weapon in Willox's hands. The other charm was a mermaid's stone of clear crystal handed down by a maternal grandfather. This ancestor had got possession of it from a mermaid, who had taken a fancy to him and whom he had carried to his home. She secured her freedom at the price of leaving this magic stone. It strongly resembled the knob or bottom of a crystal bottle. Equipped with the bridle and the stone, Willox broke the spells which the witches had cast, restored the milk to cows, cured barrenness in women, detected thieves and returned stolen property. His work was entirely beneficent. In Glenlivet, if anyone in trouble went to Willox, he would reveal the

[1] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 294 f. [2] S.A., XII, 464.

person who had injured him or who had bewitched his cattle. The Willox stone was put in a pail of water. The face of the culprit was reflected in it—at least Willox saw certain forms there which he identified with the thief. "A man at Strathdown," says a writer at the close of the eighteenth century, "has a white stone and a bridle and he cures people by giving them water off it at 1s. 6d. per bottle. If they put it on the ground it loses its virtues." [1] The Willox water was like that from the wells of virtue. It might be carried to an invalid unable to come in person. So great was the fame of Willox and his immediate descendants that in the case of any article being stolen, it was sufficient for the owner to say in presence of the thief that he would send for the noted warlock.[2] The threat secured the immediate return of the missing property.

A charm stone, an egg-shaped pebble of quartz, two inches in length by one and a half in diameter, was formerly used in Shetland as a cure for sterility. The suppliant washed her feet in burn (i.e. running) water in which the stone was laid. It passed from one wise woman to another on her death-bed. It was not handed down in the family.[3] The washing of the stone may at one time have been regarded as effective in producing rain by sympathetic magic.[4] In which case, the washing of the wooden figure of St. Fumack with water at Botriphnie may be regarded as a rain charm, and in fact may have caused the spate in the Isla, in which, according to one account, the image was swept away in the overflowing waters. Sometimes a magical stone might be employed to cure without the aid of water. Direct contact with the stone was the means by which virtue was transmitted. At the Presbytery of Turriff on 5th December, 1650, compeared Gavin Sinclair of Fyvie and confessed he had brought with him a stone from Ireland, which he produced. This stone, he alleged, had "ane secret vertue in it to cure beasts of the

[1] S.N. and Q., 3rd series, I, 56; W. H. Cranna from Commonplace Book of Young Medico, 1792-94.

[2] Mr. John Stuart of Herricks relates an incident of the kind when a theft had been committed from his grand-uncle. In regard to the Strathdown warlock, cf. Gordon Cumming, In Hebrides, 74; *Aberdeen Journal*, Notes and Queries, III, 264; Alex. Macdonald, Song and Story from Loch Ness Side, 142 f., Grant Stewart, Popular Superstitions, 218-23; Gregor, Notes, 38 f.; Hall, Travels in Scotland, I, 438 f.

[3] P.S.A.S., XXVII, 452 f. [4] Gomme, Ethnology, 168, note 1.

quarter evil, and being layd in the fold gate, it would preserve such beasts as went over it, the same not being infected from taking it, and being put thryse about the neck of the beast infected, it would cure it, these words being rehearsed :—

> In the name of the father, son and holy ghaist
> Let never this work be wrought in waist." [1]

A stone might become a charm or amulet appropriated by a single individual. A flat oval-shaped pebble was presented to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Enclosed in a small bag and suspended by a red string round his neck, this stone had been worn by a Forfarshire farmer who died in 1854 at the age of 84.[2] Great efficacy was attached to amulets as safeguards. A spectator of the battle of Benrinnes is quoted by Dalyell as saying, " Truly, we can declare that no one fell on that day who bore the Cross in his helmet." [3]

[1] Brebner, In Turriff Presbytery.
[2] Mackinlay, Folk-Lore, 243. [3] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, 144.

CHAPTER VIII.

DIVINATION.

An attribute of the witch, distinct from healing power, was the possession of hidden knowledge, knowledge acquired through her association with the devil. In virtue of this gift, she could lift the veil of the future, discover the thief, and reveal hidden secrets. Like the power of charming, it was regarded as a great endowment, vitiated by the source from which it sprang, and often by the purpose to which it was devoted. Thomas Leyis, stabler, foretold the actual date of birth and sex of a child of which he was presumably the father. "The revelation whereof he had of his master, the devil, which can be no otherwise interpreted or presupposed in respect God has not given nor granted to true Christians such secret and hid mysteries to know, but are reserved to His Heavenly Providence." [1] Andro Man said, "This year to come will be a dear year, and there shall be twice seven dear years thereafter, and this intelligence he had by Christ Sonday, his master, which is plain witchcraft and devilry." [2] A man went and asked Margaret Clerk to come and act as midwife. She told him that before he was half a mile from his own house, his wife was delivered of a child, and did not require her services, which intelligence she had of her master, the devil.[3] In all these instances the source of the hidden knowledge is ascribed to the witch's Grandmaster. The witch was a person of shrewd judgment with many secret channels of information, and her clients placed implicit faith in her words. In the trial of Bessie Skebister, Orkney, it was said that the usual custom in the Islands, when they thought the boats were in danger, was to send and ask her how they were, and if they would come home safe, "quhair vpoun ane common proverb is vsit, 'Giff Bessie say it

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 98. [2] *Ibid.*, 121. [3] *Ibid.*, 159.

is weill, all is weill.' " The possession of this supernatural knowledge was one of the reasons why poor Bessie was strangled and burned. This can hardly have been a popular judgment.

A more familiar form, in which the hidden knowledge of the witch showed itself, was in discovering the thief of stolen goods. A man with such a gift was sometimes spoken of as a sorcerer, though this term is commonly employed as a synonym for witch. The minister of Leochel delated five parishioners for consulting with the sorcerer, Patrick M'Komie, anent stolen goods. M'Komie's doings occupied the attention of the Presbytery during the whole decade, 1662-1672.[1] In August, 1724, John Elgin, in Wester Alves, was accused before the session of going to one that had converse with the devil, called John Fraser, mason at Balveny, to get information about a web belonging to the Lady Kirkton, stolen out of his house.[2] The means by which the man gained this knowledge is plainly indicated. Adam Donald of Bethelnie was consulted when clothing or articles of furniture went amissing. His answers were so worded that if they threw little light at the moment, yet, when the missing article was found, people saw that his mysterious reply plainly showed where the goods had been resetted. Besides, such a man had secret sources of knowledge and was ever listening in, while seeming to keep aloof from the movements of the world around him. The " prophet " of Bethelnie had a far-extending reputation. In 1737, the minister of Speymouth was appointed " to discourse Robert Innes in Beathill, who went to Oldmeldrum to consult a man that pretends by a prophetical spirit to find out stolen goods." [3] It almost looks as if Donald, in the eyes of his contemporaries occupied a higher plane than John Fraser of Balveny whose hidden knowledge was ascribed to converse with the devil. And yet Fraser's case occurred only thirteen years before. Two centuries ago, it was a long journey from Speymouth to Oldmeldrum, and it would appear to have been taken in vain, for in the following year when goods to the value of £16 10s. were stolen in the same Morayshire parish, John Allan did not go to the man with the prophetical spirit at Bethelnie, but to the Cross of Jackston in Fyvie, to a man named William Angus, who also had a reputation for discovering the thief. But

[1] Records of the Exercise of Alford, 8 ff.
[2] Cramond, Alves, 74. [3] Cramond, Speymouth, 52.

Angus threw no light upon the problem.[1] One need not be surprised that the wizard who could hit the mark in pointing to the depredator in his own immediate vicinity, proved a failure when some thirty or forty miles intervened between the scene of the theft and his own abode. Willox of Strathavon and his descendants had a great reputation for naming the thief. The gift required a shrewd knowledge of human nature.

1. *Hydromancy.*—Apart from those with special endowments of hidden knowledge, there were various methods by which the secrets of the future could be revealed and the veil lifted. Water was one medium employed. Resort to it was known as hydromancy. One method was the swimming of names in water. A case from Fraserburgh explains the rite. Alexander Fraser in the township of Kinbog confessed that, at the desire of John Philip, " who wanted ane serk," he had written the names of all the people in Kinbog on pieces of paper and thereafter cast the papers into the water " to try the thift supposing that be guilty persone whose name did sink." [2] This has a great resemblance to the ordeal by water in the case of a suspected witch, and if we identify a person with his name, as was common amongst primitive peoples, the resemblance is complete. In the usual form of the water ordeal, the water rejects the guilty, but there are cases, e.g. at Elgin,[3] where the sacred water rejects the innocent. The ceremony performed at Kinbog was evidently fairly common. On 5th April, 1686, two men were summoned before the Session of Grange for using unlawful ways of swimming names on paper on Sunday morning to recover lost money. The offence here was aggravated by the action taking place on the Sabbath. Its association with witchcraft in the minds of the church fathers is revealed when at a meeting on June 20th, one of the accused appeared charged with " using unlawful means of consulting wizards and writing and swimming of names among water for recovery of lost money." [4]

Different forms were employed to discover whether an animal would recover. Water was taken from a stream where the living and the dead crossed. It was sprinkled over the sick cow. If she shook off the water at the first sprinkling, it was an omen

[1] Cramond, Speymouth, 52.
[2] Cranna, Fraserburgh, 191.
[3] See p. 282.
[4] Cramond, Grange, 26.

of renewed life: if she did not shake off the water at the third sprinkling, it was a sign she would die.[1] In the uplands of Banffshire, a member of the Roman Catholic Church took as much water from the burn as could be carried in the slight hollow of a flattish stone. This she put carefully in the fire and watched. If the stone was cracked within a certain time, the cow would recover: if not, it would die. Her mother had employed this method of divination before her.[2] Again, the nature of the disease might be explored by means of water, associated with stones. Hydromancy was united with lithomancy. The forms varied. Three stones were taken, sometimes from a ford or bridge over which the living and dead passed. Sometimes they were stones in the possession of the charmer. These stones represented the head, the heart, and the body, and were so named. Placed overnight amongst the hot ashes on the hearth, they were taken up in the morning and dropped one by one into a basin of water. The stone which gave out the loudest sound as it came in contact with the water, showed the part of the body where the disease lay.[3] The discovery of the disease was also its cure. Hot stones were employed in a case in the parish of Aberdour (Aberdeenshire) when some untoward happenings led to the discovery of the delinquents and their appearance before the Kirk Session. From the records, it is not quite clear how the divination was wrought. In June, 1702, George Michie and Helen Lamb in Quarryburn were found guilty of charming in laying hot stones above their door head to find out the nature of their child's sickness, " whereby it came to pass in the just judgment of God that their house and all their plenishings with barns and byres are totally burned to ashes, due to the hot stone setting fire to the thatch of the houses." [4] It is difficult to see how they could thus divine their child's malady. The couple said, in presence of the Session, they learned the same from a beggar wife. Probably the stones were only placed above the door-head during the night, and were employed in the water test during the day. Otherwise it would appear to be an attenuated form of the rite.

[1] Calder, Banffshire Field Club, 1922, p. 33.
[2] Bishop Chisholm, Banffshire Field Club, 1884, p. 34.
[3] Gregor, Notes, 44; cf. Register of Privy Council, 2nd series, VIII, 67.
[4] Aberdour Kirk Session Records.

2. *Sleeve and Thread.*—The sleeve and the thread were often resorted to in order to find out the nature of the illness from which the patient was suffering. Jonet Lucas was charged with taking a woman's sleeve and putting a thread thereabout, "trying thereby if a woman being sick had the fevers or not." [1] This rite was regarded as one of the special points of witchcraft. Jonet said it was a common charm in the country. Elspet Strachan was indicted for charming Mage Clark for the fevers with "ane sleipth and ane thrum." [2] This charm was for long employed in the North-East for the purpose of discovering the nature of an uncertain illness. A stocking was taken and a thread rather more than twice its length. The thread was laid along the two sides of the stocking, then both were rolled together. If, when unrolled, both folds of the thread were found on the same side of the hose, the patient had the sleepy fevers. The change in the position of the thread was easily accomplished by a little manipulation on the operator's part.[3] Like other divinatory charms, the sleeve and the thread had also great powers of healing. In 1607, Isobel Smith, Cove, was charged before the Presbytery of Aberdeen with witchcraft. The evidence showed that when Jonet Jack was ill, her mother advised her to consult Smith, who would soon diagnose her ailment. The charm was employed to discover whether it was the fevers or not from which she suffered. Elspet Smith took her "slew and ane gray thred, and pat about hir bodie, and she was haillit thairefter." Jonet Jack died and Smith was accused of her death. One witness said it was a woollen thread that was employed, and that she put the thread about her body and the sleeve, and then commanded her to go once about in the name of the Father and Son and the Holy Ghost.[4]

3. *Astrology.*—Another avenue to the hidden knowledge was astrology. The wizard was an astrologer. In 1688, four persons in Grange were delated for going to consult a wizard or pretended astrologer "for clearing up alleadgances about stolen goods." This would suggest that the oracle consulted pretended to discover the thief by aid of the stars. In 1676 Isobel Davidson, from the parish of Deer, was brought before the Kirk Session

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 156. [3] *Ibid.*, 189.
[2] Robertson, Book of Bon-Accord, note p. 367.
[4] Stuart. Selections, 199 f.

of Belhelvie for having said that, knowing the month in which a person was born, she could tell them what had befallen them or would befall them. Being asked as to how she gained this knowledge, she answered "by the twelve signs," for she said there were five words for men and five for women in every sign. This information she gathered from books. It was only natural that the witch should make the stars one of the sources of her secret knowledge. A tragedy about Isobel Davidson is that a fortnight later the minister intimated to the congregation that she had drowned herself.[1] The fear of facing the church courts had driven her to despair.

4. *Dumbie.*—A *dumb person*, "a dumbie," was believed to be kin to those who practised the black art. At Aberdeen in September, 1596, "John Gordon, alias Williamson, presently detained in the kirk vault as a manifest and open witch, gave himself out to be a dumb man." It would appear that the fact of being dumb gave added prestige to the wizard, for great multitudes flocked to Gordon "and spiers at the said John divers and sundry things very prejudicial to the common people."[2] This man only pretended to be dumb. Reference is made in the records of Alford Presbytery to the practice of resorting to dumb persons for the trial of theft or the like. In 1673 the matter anent resorting to dumb persons was referred to a future diet; but the habit seems to have continued and occasioned much dispeace among neighbours. Probably the "dumbie" pointed to the wrong person as the evildoer. At Alford, in September, 1677, "it being represented by several brethren that several persons did consult a dumb woman (alleged to be within the bounds of the Presbytery of Kincardine) in relation to stolen goods and other secret things whereby was attained great enmity amongst neighbours and scandal that such persons should with impunity harbour or advise an ill report upon their neighbours, therefore the Presbytery judged it fit to be recommended to the Bishop and Synod to obtain their advice their anent."[3] Two women in Fraserburgh were accused of "consulting and synding with ane dumb man."[4]

[1] Presbytery Book of Strathbogie, xiv.
[2] Stuart, Extracts from Council Register, II, 144 f.
[3] Records of Exercise of Alford, 207, 281.
[4] Cranna, Fraserburgh, 191.

Dumb persons were also believed to possess second sight and be able to foretell the future. Unable to express themselves in intelligible speech, and when they saw impending danger, able only to make weird sounds and signs, they were believed to be in league with Satanic powers. The belief has been common in all ages. The dumbie in Scotland was credited with supernormal gifts and considered capable of succouring a friend or wreaking cruel vengeance upon a foe.[1]

5. *Sieve and Shears.*—The most universal and ancient of all the modes of divination was by means of the sieve, called coscinomancy. The shears were usually associated with the sieve, which thus became

> Th' oracle of sieve and shears
> That turns as certain as the spheres.

The points of a pair of scissors were stuck into the rim of a sieve or riddle, which was then suspended by the operator, having his finger in the ring of the scissors. Sometimes this was the forefinger, sometimes the middle finger, of the right hand. Two persons might be engaged in the task, each with a finger in the "bowl" of the shears, holding it steadily. Then a form of words was employed, usually asking Peter and Paul whether A, B or C (i.e. the persons suspected) had stolen the missing article.[2] It is evident that the slightest motion on the part of the diviner, even though unconscious, would communicate itself to the sieve, which would then turn or swing. But to the believer such movement was a sure indication that the thief had been named. If it revealed aught, it only disclosed the person whom the operator suspected. Its oracles were not infallible. There is evidence that at times it blundered. In March, 1607, it was reported at Ellon Presbytery that Margaret King, vagabond, was fugitive from the parish of Ellon "for turning the five and scheir."[3] Rather than face the reverend brethren for so dreadful an offence, she fled the parish. Ronald Hay, in Overton of Straloch, was to know the grave view the same Presbytery took of his delinquency. For turning the "sive and scheirs," he was sentenced to make his repentance in the jogs in sackcloth, barefooted and

[1] Cf. The Dumbie's Malison in Grant, Tales of the Glens, 161 ff.
[2] Cf. Witchcraft Detected, 42; R. Scott, Discourses, XII, 17, 262.
[3] Mair, Ellon, 62.

barelegged, on three Sabbaths. He spoke a dozen names before the sieve turned, repeating each name three times.[1] The same mode of divination was reported from Elgin. In 1603 a cordiner was charged with turning the "schiff and schier."[2] In 1620 Jonet Douglas, when she lost a sheep, turned "the sieve and the schier" and they fell on Thomas Jonkin's house.[3] In 1636 three cases were dealt with by Elgin Kirk Session.[4] In 1641, Majorie Ferguson, spouse to Thomas Innes in Kilbo, was ordained to appear before Elgin Presbytery for turning "the siefe and the sheare according as was confessed by her before the session of Alves."[5] The serious view the Presbytery of Deer took of this offence was shown at a visitation of the parish of Aberdour in 1654. On that occasion, the minister and session asked the Presbytery's advice as to how to deal with George M'Grigor and George Cowie. These two men had been convicted by the session for employing unlawful means to find out who stole some of their sheep. They used "that piece of devilry which they commonly call turning the siefe and the sheare upon which they had been misled to the misjudging one who was proved innocent." The sheep, having only strayed, were found again. No one was guilty, but the oracle evidently moved at some particular name. M'Grigor was a Highlander, and thought it was no sin, being ordinarily practised in the place where he was born. The Presbytery, "both because of the atrocity of the fact (which, when the Presbytery considers and hears the nature of it reported, they cannot but look upon it but as devilry and flowing from an impact at least, if not an express covenant with the devil) and also for curbing and repressing such wickedness, appoints the said George M'Grigor and George Cowie to be excommunicated unless it should be found that they were swallowed up for the same."[6] In the eyes of the Presbytery of Deer it seems to have been the abomination of iniquity. The language in which they characterised the offence shows that it was unfamiliar to the reverend inquisitors. This case reveals how a rite of this nature comes to the knowledge of the ruling powers. A mistake has been made. The man accused protests his innocence to the session. The

[1] Mair, Ellon, 108.
[2] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 112 f.
[3] *Ibid.*, 164 f.
[4] *Ibid.*, 230 f.
[5] Cramond, Alves, 9.
[6] Cramond, Aberdour, 25; and Kirk Session Minutes.

offenders are brought to book. A much less serious view was taken by the elders of Oldmachar less than 20 years later. Two women were dealt with for "casting the fivve and shier." A person had lost a pair of sheets and some money. To frighten her neighbour, Janet Watson took up a "fivv and pair shiers,"[1] and said by St. Peter and St. Paul such and such a woman hath the sheets. The session, considering it was done "more through imprudence than any other way," felt a fine of forty shillings would meet the offence, the goodwife of the house, where it took place, to be mulcted in an equal sum. It was known in Rossshire,[2] Shetland,[3] and St. Andrews, Orkney.[4] In all these instances the purpose was by discovering the thief to recover the stolen goods. But the sieve was also employed in Shetland as a magic charm when young people wished to see their future husband and wife. The method was as follows: Take a sieve, keys, a pair of scissors, a comb and a bit of silver. Open two or three doors: it was all the better if there were four, and these opposite to each other. The person who wished to lift the veil looked out at the outer door and then turned the sieve three times with the sun, and then three times against the sun, repeating the following words each time:—

I sift, I tift: I sift, I tift;
I sift dis night for dee
And he (or she) it is to be my true love
Let them appear presently.[5]

This was quite different from the ancient practice of coscinomancy, where the sieve acted by its inherent power, and gave its oracle. In the Shetland instance, it was consciously moved by the operator. The sieve and the shears rite was known in Denmark. It was the custom when there was theft by one of the servants to resort to the sieve. The form was the same as in Scotland.[6] At Mecklenberg in Germany a sieve and pair of scissors which had been inherited were employed. Two persons of opposite sexes were the operators in the dark.[7] Greeks, Romans, Slavs employed this method of discovering the guilty.

[1] Munro, Records of Old Aberdeen, II, 67.
[2] Mackay, Records of Inverness, 156.
[3] Mill, Diary, 187.
[4] Kinloch, Reliquiæ Antiquæ Scotticæ, 13.
[5] Matthewson in County Folk-Lore, III (O. and S.), 160.
[6] Thorpe, *op. cit.*, II, 272.
[7] *Ibid.*, III, 161.

6. A modern development of the sieve and shears was the *Bible and the Key*. At Elgin, in 1724, a reference was made to the Presbytery from the session of Elgin anent Agnes Urquhart, who admitted charming by using the Bible and key, for finding out things that were stolen. This she had done frequently and had also taught her daughter the said art.[1] That this is a development of the sieve ritual is shown by an intermediate stage from Germany. In Ditmarschen the key was laid for a few minutes in the family Bible to sanctify it, then the wise man took the key and caused the sieve to turn round upon it, mentioning names. The next stage was when the sieve dropped out and the key was supported on the tips of the actor's fingers. The key, often that of the entrance door, was usually rather longer than the Bible, its head and handle projecting. It was placed in the Book at the 50th Psalm. The Bible was then closed and tied with tape. Two independent persons supported the Bible by means of the ends of the key resting on their forefingers. No one spoke except the inquirer who named the suspected thief three times, and then repeated the eighteenth verse of the Psalm: "When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentest with him, etc." If the Bible turned round and fell, it was proof that the person named was the thief. Sometimes the Bible and key were suspended on a nail, when the suspect's name was repeated. But this must have been in the declining days of the rite. For the human touch was lost. Surely one of the last-known instances of its employment was that which came to light in a slander case in the Sheriff Court of Montrose. It is said to have occurred about the end of last century. A witness, cross-examined by the Judge, at last blurted out, "A' that I ken aboot it, my Lord, is just this,—when Mary's name was mentioned, the key ran three times round the table: that's a' I ken aboot it."[2]

Two other means of peering into hidden mysteries were the ordeal of the grave and the ordeal of blood.

7. *The Ordeal of the Grave.*—To find out if a sickly child would live or die, it was presented to the grave. At Kemnay in 1675, Elspet Crombie, at the desire of Margaret Cupar, had made a grave before her dwelling house. Margaret Cupar had, under silence of the night, brought a child, which child had been long

[1] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 379.
[2] Round the Ancient City, 350.

diseased, belonging to the said Elspet Crombie, and offered the child to the grave. Not long thereafter the child presented to the grave, and Margaret Cupar's own child, both died. Margaret Cupar confessed, and said she left the child at the grave and said "God send it health or heaven."[1] Dr. Gregor explains how the charm worked. Two holes called graves, the one named the living, the other the dead grave, were dug. The sufferer was laid between the holes without being told which had been named the living or which the dead grave. If the patient turned with his face to the living grave, it was a sure omen of recovery.[2] When it was a young child, or the case of a person so ill as to be incapable of making the desired movement, a different method was followed. An instance occurred at Cullen in 1649. Marjorie Pulmer, having a sick child and desiring to know the issue of the illness, digged two graves. One she called the dead grave, and the other the quick grave. Then she desired a woman, who knew not how the graves were designated, to go and put the child in one of the graves. She believed, if the child were laid in the quick grave, it would live, and if in the dead grave, it would die. The same rite was observed in the parish of Reay, Caithness,[3] and in Shetland.[4] Most of the divinatory rites were also curative. Probably this charm was originally the latter. In the Shetland case, it was resorted to as a cure for consumption. As a curative rite, it seems at least possible that it originated in a belief that the ailing child was a changeling. The consequent effort was made to get back the true child. The dwining changeling was left in the one grave. The other grave was awaiting the parents' own progeny. This theory is confirmed by the fact that there is a suggestion that any place was not suitable for the practice of the rite. At Reay it was beside a loch. Fairy changelings could be exposed only at particular places. Further, a grave or hole in the ground was a place where the exchange might take place. Miss J. A. Lord (Tyre) in 1904 tells of what happened at a dispensary meeting in connection with the British Syrian Mission. A woman brought a baby, a thin, emaciated bag of skin and bones. Some Bedouin advised the mother, "I will tell you of a remedy which will not fail to make your boy fat and well. You must take your son to the graveyard and put a basket

[1] Davidson, Inverurie, 339 f.
[2] Gregor, Notes, 204.
[3] Brand, Orkney, 808.
[4] See p. 251.

over his head, lay him on a grave and say this: 'O you inhabitants of the grave, come and take your son, and give me back my son.' Repeat this several times, then leave your son there and you retire a little distance away from him." [1] The ritual here suggests that the Syrian mother considered the unthriving child to be a changeling. It may have been so at one time with the mothers of the North-East who believed a sickly bairn was a fairy's unthriving brat, and resorted to the ordeal of the grave to get back their own.

8. *Ordeal of Blood.*—When a murder had been committed, and the murderer was undiscovered, it was usual to resort to the ordeal of blood. All in the neighbourhood were convened and made to touch the corpse. If it bled at the nose, or mouth, or at a wound when touched by a certain individual, that man was the murderer. The reason for this was ascribed by the Rev. Mr. Wodrow to the wonderful Providence of God who had said, "Thou shalt not suffer a murderer to live" and had provided this means by which the murderer might be readily detected. Before this, King James in his Dæmonologie had spoken of the blood crying to heaven for revenge of the murderer, "God having appointed that secret supernaturall sign of that secret unnaturall crime." [2] In October, 1698, Jean Gordon, widow of Mr. Fraser, minister of Slains, who had been for some years weak in body and mind, one morning was found dead in bed. Suspicion fell upon her stepson, a minister of the Gospel. There was no sign of violence. Was it poison? They resorted to the ordeal. The body was laid out in open view. Mr. Dunbar, minister of Cruden, prayed to God that he would discover the author of the violence done, if any there were. Then all present touched the body, but it gave no sign.[3] In the parish of Aberdour, there is, or was, on the farm of Towie, a cairn, known as Brodie's cairn. It took its name from a farmer who murdered his mother. Her body was brought to the gate of the churchyard. Every individual was called to touch the naked corpse. It was noticed that while this was going on, the son kept at a distance. When forced to approach the body, he confessed the

[1] Folk-Lore, XV (1904), 347 f.
[2] King James, Dæmonologie, Pt. III, c. 6, p. 136.
[3] Chambers. Domestic Annals of Scotland. III, 208 f.

murder.[1] It will be observed that while in neither of these cases did the corpse bleed, in the one case because the suspect was innocent, and in the other because he was afraid to undergo the ordeal, yet the community was quite convinced that here was a means of discovering the guilty and clearing the innocent.

In the trial of Jonet Rendall, the Orkney witch, in 1629, it was stated that Edward Gray had died. Before his death he accused Jonet of causing it. As soon as she came into the room where the corpse was lying, it having lain a good while and not bleeding, immediately much blood flowed from it, a sure token that she was the cause of his death.[2] Here there was no touch. The immediate proximity of the murderer was sufficient for the dead body to give its oracle.

[1] N.S.A., Aberdeenshire, 264 f.
[2] County Folk-Lore, III (O. and S.), 104.

CHAPTER IX.

REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS.

One wonders what was the motive that inspired the witch to pursue her work, an outcast from society, hunted by the civil and ecclesiastical powers. Sometimes her action was prompted by the desire for revenge. Jonet Wishart brought death upon John Low, stabler, because he would not lend her his kiln and barn. She inflicted harm upon another man, because she envied his heritable right to land, upon a third because he refused to sell her wool, and upon a fourth because, in the heat of a quarrel he called her witch.[1] Helen Fraser caused disablement to a woman because she disapproved of a marriage the witch favoured.[2] Scudder caused a man's death, because his wife had not satisfied all her demands. She had given her one chicken, but refused her a second.[3] Often a witch's services might be purchased. If two persons were at variance, one of them might resort to a sorceress, who, for a reward, proportionate to the degree of injury she was asked to inflict, was always ready to put her craft at another's disposal. What, however, kept the witch constantly in action was her need "to make for herself gains and commoditie." At one period, witchcraft was a profession. Its exponents had to be continually at work, if they were to gain a livelihood. In later times its rewards were meagre, but in its more spacious days, there were times when the witch fared sumptuously, having regard to the standards of the age. Payments, especially for minor services, were usually made in kind. But even without any service rendered, the witch imposed a levy upon the community. Scudder came to the mill of Caskieben, and asked meal of the miller. Being refused, she caused both the wheels of the mill to break.[4] On the other hand, the

[1] Sp. Misc., 1, 88, 89, 92.
[2] *Ibid.*, 107.
[3] *Ibid.*, 178.
[4] *Ibid.*, 180.

witch professed to bestow many boons upon her credulous neighbours, who, in return, made her some recompense. Helen Fraser got a large piece of salmon from the fishers of Newburgh as a bribe to procure them a good fishing.[1] With the witch it was usually a case of prepayment. For healing cattle with his stone of virtue, Gavin Sinclair " a real charmer " in Fyvie was rewarded with a firlot of meal in one case, and two or three pecks in another.[2] Spaldairg confessed " at her being put off " that she and Trachak received a hundred merks every year from the goodwife of Boig to make witchcraft to destroy William Forbes and his crop.[3] Preinak of Elgin acknowledged treating Nicoll Watson's hand and receiving 6s. 8d. for her services.[4] Frequently the payment was in both money and kind. For curing David Anderson of the prevalent distemper, Isobel Cockie received 20 shillings in silver, half a firlot of meal and the promise that her patient would make her daughter a kist on his recovery. For that period, this acknowledgment of the witch's service was by no means niggard. Cockie had a method of providing herself with clients or patients. She taught Helen Suffok the art and then sent her through the country, bewitching folks. These were advised to come to Cockie for relief. It was a shrewdly-conceived scheme for securing to herself the means of livelihood.[5] The witches left nothing undone in their appeal to the superstitious fears of the multitude. They span their tales of trafficking with the unseen world. Some professed communication with the fairies. Others, like Christan Nauchty in Elgin, had wonderful experiences to unfold of the spirit land. She had been three times away, each time eight days. She was carried away with the wind. The only persons she knew were John Mowtra and Packman who had been long dead. There were about 100 others in her company whom she knew not. Their faces seemed white and " lane " but their backs were " boss " like fiddles.[6] This nonsensical talk was intended to impress the witch's clients with belief in her alliance with invisible powers. At her trial, Helen Fraser of Foveran confessed that she was " a common abuser " (i.e. deceiver of the people), and that to sustain herself

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 106.
[2] Brebner, In Turriff Presbytery.
[3] Sp. Misc., I, 188.
[4] Cramond, Records of Kirk Session of Elgin, 45.
[5] Sp. Misc., I, 114.
[6] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 221.

and her children she "pretended knowledge she had not, and undertook to do things she could not." [1] That fairly accurately describes the witch's position. Faith in the magic of her spell was now gradually waning, and with its wane, the rewards of the craft diminished. Like her modern representative who requires her hand to be crossed with silver before she gives her oracle, the witch could not practise her art unless payment, or a definite promise, was first made. The charm would not work. It was proved against Bessie Thom, an Aberdeen witch, that, knowing a husband and wife were on bad terms with each other, she asked the wife, "What will you give me if I rid you of your husband? Twenty merks?" At last a bargain was struck by which for the payment of 40s. and a "mease of beiff," the husband should be disposed of.[2] This was one of the most remunerative fields of the witch's activity. There was another demand which the witch made that could not be attributed to the desire for personal enrichment. Various cases occur when the question crops up of reward for restoring health and saving human life. The witch when offered a cow or horse declines. She must have a human victim, a life for a life.[3] This does not fall within the province of personal rewards. It is rather an old nature-worship survival, which the northern witch has attached to her ritual.

The benefits that accrued to the witch were hardly commensurate with the perils and penalties she incurred. At one period, no one was safe from the charge of witchcraft. A hint from a neighbour, the suggestion of a word innocently spoken, followed by some tragic happening, and the authorities were on the track of the helpless woman. Searchers were appointed in every Presbytery. At a meeting of the Synod of Moray in April, 1644, "in respect of the great increase of witchcraft, for the better repressing and more easy trial of the same, it is thought fit, according to the Act of the General Assembly there be commissioners in every Presbytery for apprehending, searching, trying and executing witches." [4] Kirk Sessions showed more zeal in hunting out witches than in dealing with their own erring members. More than one session was taken to task by its superior

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 105. [2] *Ibid.*, 166.
[3] Cf. Viking Club Misc., II, 110 f.; County Folk-Lore, III (O. and S.), 54.
[4] Cramond, Synod of Moray, 70.

court for neglect in the latter respect. None were admonished for their slackness in pursuing the witch's trail. When discovered, the charmer was handed over to the civil authority. Apart from oral evidence as to her accomplishments and achievements, there were other ways by which the truth or falsity of the charges could be proved.

There were certain marks or stigmata on the body which in themselves might be decisive in determining guilt. One mark was made by the teeth or claws of the devil. This was called the devil's nip.[1] It would remain a discoloured spot. There was another mark which might be found on the body, even after the witch organisation was broken up. This was a mole or little teat, a supernumerary nipple. Both the natural and artificial marks were insensible, it was said, to pain, and did not bleed when pricked. A class of men known as witch-prickers grew up whose services were requisitioned in connection with the witch trials. Jonet Leask was brought before Andro Man, who had now recanted, to be tried by him in the house of William Bain, Portsoy. Andro affirmed she had been a witch for thirty years, and had the devil's mark under her left pap.[2] A mark on the body was visible to the naked eye. To make sure that it was a devil's mark, the services of a pricker were employed. The weapon he used was a pin or "preen," sometimes specified as "lang preens of three inches," or "a preen the length of one's finger." These were inserted in the suspected part. If the victim now showed insensibility to pain, and if there was an absence of bleeding, this was clear evidence as to who had caused the mark. Sir Walter Scott says that often a special pin was employed which explained the lack of hæmorrhage. "Besides the fact that the persons of old people especially sometimes contain spots devoid of sensibility, there is also room to believe that the professed prickers used a pin, the point or lower part of which was, on being pressed down, sheathed in the upper, which was hollow for the purpose, and that which appeared to enter the body did not pierce it at all."[3] It may have been so, for the man whose profession was that of witch pricker was evidently destitute of all conscience or moral sensibility. In the North-East, however, there is no evidence to suggest the employment of this specially contrived

[1] Cf. p. 155.
[2] Sp. Misc., I, 137.
[3] Scott, Demonology, 297.

pin. In the charge against Marjory Mutch it is stated that being confronted by William May in a house in Portsoy, he declared her a manifest witch "in token whereof he showed her mark under her left lug in her crag, and a pin being inserted therein by the Laird of Esslemont, she could not feel the same." [1] This incident discloses the state of public opinion in regard to the witch cult, when the Laird of Esslemont acted as witch-pricker. Even when that practice had ceased, folks still continued to believe in the "mole" or other mark as a sign of association with Satan. A mole "abeen the breath" in a woman showed she was a witch. In the nineteenth century, in the parish of Aberdour, much evil did such a woman work upon a man who displaced her from her home. She killed four of his cows, one after the other.[1]

All kinds of fiendish tortures were employed to extort a confession. A suspect was branded like other malefactors. In the accounts of the Dean of Guild of the Burgh of Aberdeen there is an entry "To John Justice for burning upon the cheek of four persons suspected of witchcraft and banished, 26s. 8d." [3] This was a common way of dealing with witches under suspicion, but it was not confined to them. On the other hand, excruciating tortures were applied to the witch when it was desired that she should confess. Various instruments were employed.

The caschie laws (or caspie claws, Orkney, Caschi clavis) was an iron frame into which the leg of the victim was placed. It was then heated in a furnace and the examination took place during this process. The stocks and "lang irons" may be a modification of the same instrument. The pilnie winks was probably connected with the thumb screw. Pressing was another means of securing "confession." The victim was laid flat with legs and arms outstretched in the form of a cross. A wide board or door was placed on the top of her. Huge stones or pieces of iron were heaped upon the door. The witch bridle added to the agony. An iron bit was thrust into the mouth with four sharp prongs. One pierced the tongue, and another the palate, while the other two, pointing outward, pierced the cheeks. This bridle secured to the back of the witch's neck by a padlock was then fastened to the wall. Notables took part in the cruelties

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 133.
[3] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, VII, 283. [4] Sp. Misc., I, 53.

inflicted upon the witch crew. King James presided at the torture of Dr. Fian for causing the storm, which nearly engulfed the king's ship on its way home from Norway.

Apart from the pricking and the tortures, there were various means by which a witch might be tested. One was the ordeal of water. This was an ancient ordeal, the original conception being that the sacred waters rejected the guilty person and so he could not sink.[1] It is found in the laws of King Athelstan (924-94). The person to undergo this ordeal is prepared by prayer and fasting, tied with the right thumb to the right big toe, and the left thumb to the left big toe, and then cast into the waters with suitable prayers to the Almighty to declare the right. If he sank, he was declared innocent: if he floated, he was deemed guilty. This ordeal survived in connection with the witches. In their case, the right thumb was tied to the left big toe, and the left thumb to the right big toe. Sometimes, but not always, wrapped up in a sheet, the victim was cast into the water. When the body floated it was an omen of guilt: when the body sank, it was a token of innocence, but no attempt at rescue was made. King James gives a Christian interpretation of the water ordeal, "the fleeting in the water." "It appears that God hath appointed (for a supernatural sign of the monstrous impiety of the witches) that the water shall refuse to receive them in her bosom that have shaken off them the sacred water of Baptism, and wilfully refused the benefit thereof."[2] But the water ordeal long antedates Christian baptism. A pool in the Carron near Dunnottar Church was at one time used for testing the witches. Gaun's pot in the Isla is the pool where the Keith witches were drowned who were convicted of "indecent familiarities with the devil." On the south bank of the stream, is the stone or scaur from which they were flung into the water. Such a sight was not to be missed. It provided the common people with a welcome thrill. The story is told of a man, who, for some crime was nailed by the ear to the gallows tree. A witch was to be drowned in the Pot. In his anxiety to witness the spectacle he wrenched away his head from the gibbet and had the joy of seeing the wretched creature drowned in the dark waters.[3]

[1] Smith, Religion of Semites, 179.
[2] Dæmonologie, Pt. III, c. 6, p. 136.
[3] Sim, Legends of Strathisla, 106.

Close to the town of Elgin, east of the Cathedral, was the Order Pot, in which witches were drowned up to 1560. A curious interpretation of the water ordeal is given in connection with the trial of Marjory Bisset. Dragged through the stour, in sore plight, with her grey hairs hanging loose, she kept crying, " Pity ! pity ! " The Friars told Maister Wiseman, the clerk, that she said her Aves and Hail Marys backwards, and others asserted that the maukin which was started at Bareflat had been traced to her dwelling. She professed her innocence, but a leper appeared and, unbaring his withered arm, said this was due to ointment she had given him. Marjory cried piteously God had forsaken her, for she had given the ointment, which her husband had brought home from beyond the seas, with all good intent. She was dragged away and thrown into the pool. When she went down into the water a great shout rose from the crowd ; when she would have come up, there was silence for a time, but when she sank to rise no more, they shouted, " To Satan's kingdom hath she gone." [1] This is different from the usual conception of the ordeal, according to which a witch was expected to float. At first one is inclined to think that the shouts were due to the inconsistency of a crowd. But elsewhere there are two traces of the Elgin idea. In the code of Ḥammurabi, if the river conquers a suspected wizard (or witch) he is guilty : if he is saved, he is innocent.[2] Further, in the swimming of the names in water,[3] the name that sinks is the guilty one.

When the witch was declared guilty, her doom was sealed. The Aberdeen witches were ordered by the court of Justiciary to be taken out " betwixt the hills, bund to a staik and verreit thereat, quhill they be deid, and than to be brint in assis." [4] The victims were led out to their fate amid the jeers and curses of the mob. Raised over a heap of peats and firewood, upon which many tar barrels had been emptied, they were bound to the stake. The executioner now tightened a rope about their necks : they were " verreit," i.e. strangled. Then fire was applied, and they were reduced to ashes. Often there were dreadful scenes witnessed. At Brechin, in December, 1608, some witches were burned alive—there was no strangling—after such

[1] Shaw, History of Province, I, 380 f.

[2] Johns, Code of Ḥammurabi, H.D.B., V, 596, and Jastrow, Religion in Babylonia and Assyria, 391.

[3] See p. 265.

[4] Sp. Misc., I, 155.

a cruel manner that some of them died in despair, renouncing and blaspheming Others, half burned, broke out of the fire and were cast again into the flaming mass.[1]

In the year of the deadly fever attributed to witchcraft, the city of Aberdeen, without a murmur, bore the serious cost of consigning to the flames those adjudged to be guilty of sorcery. "For trailing Manteith throw the streittis of the town in ane cart quha hangit herself in Prisoun and for cart hyir and eirding of hir, 10s." She escaped her tormentors' hands by taking her own life. The expenses connected with the last rites of Jonet Wishart and Isobel Cockie are as follows: "For twenty loads of peats to burn them, 40s.; for 1 boll of coals, 23s.; for 4 tar barrels (i.e. barrels of tar), 26s. 8d.; for fire and iron barrels, 16s. 8d.; for a staik and dressing of it, 16s.; for 4 fathom of rope, 4s.; for carrying the peats, coals, and barrels to the hill, 13s. 4d.; for John Justice for their execution, 13s. 4d."[2]

The procedure followed here seems to have been the usual one. The last witch thus to die in Scotland was burned at Dornoch. Two poor women, natives of Crathie, residing at Loth, in the county of Sutherland, were tried for witchcraft and condemned to be burned. The mother was accused of using her daughter as a horse in her midnight excursions and of having her shod by the devil. In proof of which the daughter had a deformed hand, due to her mother not having properly unwitched her. The girl made her escape, but the old woman died. She seems to have been fatuous, and is said on the morning of her execution to have warmed her hands composedly at the "bonny fire." She was burned in a pitch barrel Burt, who was sent to Scotland about the year 1730, gives the date as 1727,[3] but most fix on 1722 as the year when the last witch paid the supreme penalty in Scotland.[4]

The tortures of the witches can never be justified. Doubtless many innocent persons suffered. But the witch covens in the days of their power were a menace to human happiness and human life. They disturbed the peace of the home, they terrorised, when they could, those on whose bounty they fed, and

[1] Register of Privy Council, 2nd series, XIV, 605.
[2] Sp. Misc., I, 52. [3] Burt, Letters, I, 230.
[4] Cf. Bentinck, Dornoch Cathedral, 462 ff.; Scott, Demonology, 338; H. F. Campbell, Caithness and Sutherland, 161; Stirton, Crathie, 241 f.

many of them were not guiltless of the black art of poisoning. In their great days, they not only imposed on the credulity of the ignorant, they felt quite capable of attacking those in the seats of the mighty. The minister of Auldearn was assailed by their magic craft in his own house. They practised their deadliest arts against the Lairds of Park and Lochloy. Transmitted from generation to generation was the knowledge, not only of herbs and how to heal, but also of poisons and how to kill. Often, doubtless, deceived themselves, in regard to the effects of the contents of their bags and ointments, they imposed on others, and were long held in terror by the mass of their countrymen. By their abandoned and licentious orgies and by their readiness to gratify their employers in any base purpose of revenge, they proved themselves to be a menace to society, and a peril to the state. The constituted authorities had to put forth a strong hand to deal with this evil power, which challenged their supremacy. The form in which these powers dealt out the last penalty to the witches we are not asked to defend. It belonged to the age in which they suffered. On the other hand, the most profound sympathy must be felt for those innocent old women who endured untold cruelties because of a neighbour's ill-will and because Church and state alike were so unenlightened as to imagine they were doing the will of God in burning helpless and inoffensive creatures at the stake.

In spite of suffering and imprisonment and death, the witch handed on her heritage of knowledge and skill to her successor. Scudder learned her art of her mother, and her mother before her received her initiation from " an elf man." [1] He would be an itinerant practitioner. Margaret Clerk when only fifteen years old was taught by her sister Spaldarg.[2] Janet Breadheid was enticed to the witch's art by her husband and his mother.[3] Jonet Wishart's skill was passed on to her only son, Thomas Leyis.[4] The transmission in these cases was by means of a relative, but an aged sorceress was often the vehicle of handing on the art to another generation.

In the trial of Jonet Wishart it was stated that her daughter-in-law, Elspet Reid, came to Jonet's house at three o'clock in the morning and found her sitting " mother-naked as she was

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 177.
[2] *Ibid.*, 160 f.
[3] Pitcairn, Criminal Trials, III, 616.
[4] Sp. Misc., I, 99.

born at the fireside, and ane other auld wife, sick like mother-naked sitting between Jonet's shoulders making their cantrips." [1] The knowledge was transmitted from one witch to another. When they could not meet in covens, they could meet in twos or threes, the older instructing the younger. In the last stage, the powers were passed on from warlock to witch, and from witch to warlock. In the great days there was the same succession. The Queen of Elfin initiated Andro Man: the devil introduced the witches to the black arts. Peter Smith, in Towie, Aberdeenshire, a wise man, used to say that he had got the secret from his wife before she died, and that he could communicate it to a woman before he passed away.[2] The same belief in transmission to the opposite sex was held in Ross-shire down to the beginning of the twentieth century.[3] In Kincardineshire, the noted warlock of Glendye inherited his powers from his mother.[4]

When the witch makes her last appearance on the stage, she is but some poor old beldame, a relic from the past. Still treasuring some of the lore of her forerunners, she seeks to eke out a precarious livelihood by selling charms, working spells, and foretelling the future for the benefit of those who will reward her humble services. Now a poor withered creature, a woman with a past, who by some early misdemeanour has cut herself off from her kindred, much in solitude, the inhabitant of a lonely moorland glen, she is resorted to, in their hours of stress, by devout churchgoers, who, beneath this outward mask of respectability, have an underlying belief in the potency of the witch's spell.

Tales told at the fireside of a winter's even helped to perpetuate the belief, and in the freemasonry that existed amongst the servants on a farm, there was retailed many a story of the witch and her fearful enchantments. Sometimes this belief comes to the surface even in the nineteenth century. In its opening years John Smith in Moss-side, Deskford, objected to the session giving a certificate of moral character to James M'Hattie in Squardoch, as he and several others were deprived of their cows' milk, and M'Hattie's wife was believed by her witchcraft to have abstracted it.[5] Rev. Dr. Allan of Marnoch, who died in

[1] Sp. Misc., I, 90.
[2] Gregor, Folk-Lore Journal, VII, 281
[3] Henderson, Survivals, 299. [4] Grant, Tales of Glens, 63.
[5] Cramond, Church and Churchyard of Deskford, 25.

1918, had an uncle at Retannoch in Rothiemay, who believed his cows were bewitched. To break the spell, Janet Heburn, his wife (with the husband's consent) drove them over the burn of Relashes and back again at midnight, the result being that their milk which had been dried up, now flowed freely at milking time.[1] Jane Rutherford, who died in Cairney in November, 1903, was said to have possessed a bewitched cow. She determined to sell it, and insisted on receiving payment across the cow's back, part of the price to be a sixpence. The crooked sixpence could break the spell.[2] Sir Hugh Gilzean Reid, writing in 1870, says that only a few years before, an old woman was living in Aberdeenshire with the brand upon her, for her grandmother had been a noted witch, shot and killed by a crooked sixpence. The sins of the mother were laid upon the child and grandchild. "Most people pretended," he says, "to disbelieve the absurd stories, but having heard them from their youth, the influence of early impressions was apparent."[3] An Elgin correspondent of the *Scotsman* of 8th January, 1925, tells of going with a purchaser of a cow to a small farm in the parish of Dallas, Morayshire. The cow was taken home but died within a few days from the effects of eating a piece of oilcloth. The buyer returned to the same farm, and purchased a second cow, to the surprise of the farmer, who marvelled at his taking such a risk. On being paid the price, the seller put into the purchaser's hand an arrow's head, saying, "Tak ye that wi' her. Ye'll be none the waur o't onywey."

Among the seafaring population there are many who to this day still believe in the witch's power. The following instances from a leading fishing port on the Moray Firth were furnished by a friend. Names are omitted. One morning a fisherman was proceeding from his home to the harbour. He was a member of the Town Council and could harangue on politics or religion with marvellous fluency. He carried under each arm his lines, baited and neatly arranged in the wooden sculls. He clanked along leisurely in his leather top boots when suddenly he took the first turn to the left along a side street, then turning to the right passed along the road parallel to his original path and finally right-wheeled again down a narrow lane. He had traversed three sides of a square in vain, for right at the foot of the lane, ready to con-

[1] Rev J. J Calder, Cairney. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] Social and Religious Life of the North, 107.

front him with her greeting, " a fine mornin'," was the lady who was the cause of all his fear, the Black Witch. It was too late to retrace his steps—that in itself would have spelt ill-luck. His wonderful gift of speech for once failed him. He did not even reply to the friendly greeting, but merely muttered, sotto voce, " most awfu', most awfu'," for to meet the Black Witch, as a man went to his boat, meant no catch for that day.

A fisherman was busy " redding his line." He had just returned from sea, and was going over his lines, taking off the old bait and coiling the line neatly into a clean scull. There was a length of the line on the ground beside him, and over it stepped the Red Witch, for the town boasted of two traffickers in the black art. Anyone could have stepped over that line with impunity, but not so the Red Witch. This meant that the line would henceforth fail of its purpose. With an angry gesture, the man shouted, " Hey, step back, step back over that line." The order was immediately obeyed. The man was not to be trifled with. By stepping back over the line, she had unwitched it. She had removed the ill-luck.

Two or three years ago a minister was newly inducted to a church in the same town. Soon after, taking a walk along the shore, some one told him that A.B.'s boat was about to set out for the English fishing. Thinking he would greet his parishioner before his departure, he made for the harbour and hailed the skipper, but found him surly, uncommunicative, and lacking in ordinary courtesy. A.B. did not dare to ask the new minister, " Throw us good luck " in order to counteract the evil influence of his presence. The skipper was disturbed, but not dismayed. At once he took the necessary steps to avert disaster. He ordered the loosening of the mooring ropes and followed this up with " Full steam ahead," as he grasped the steering wheel. Out into the bay the vessel sped. When about half a mile out, it began to turn in a huge circle. The people on shore noticed the unusual course. Seven times round the bay went the vessel, always following the way of the sun. A.B. himself held the wheel, and during the whole performance had his hand on the cord of the siren which he kept blowing continuously. The townsfolk were somewhat alarmed at his behaviour, thinking that a man had fallen overboard, and that he was circling round the spot where the fisherman had disappeared. They looked on the blasts of

the siren as calls for assistance from shore. But no boat put to sea. Those who went down to the sea in ships knew the cause. To the landsmen they explained, "Oh, A.B. had the minister seeing him off. Somebody might tell the minister tae bide at hame: it wad save a hantle o' trouble." My informant saw and heard this effort to outwit the powers of darkness.

The inland parishes have the same story to tell. Mary Gillan, whose mother was a witch of wide repute, lived at Whitehill in the parish of New Deer. She inherited her mother's reputation and practice. Her curses were feared. They were fulfilled with unerring certainty. She was told the children were playing round her clothes poles and might break them. "Deil brak the legs o' whaever braks my poles." A boy broke one of the posts. Soon after he was injured in playing football.

A lad was told by her to go down stairs for a drink of water. "A wunna seek," he answered. Soon he fell down the stairs. The older people were wiser than offend her. She went to a farmer who would have spurned the thought that he was a believer in witchcraft, and asked him to bring her home a load of peats. It was the busy season, but rather than incur her ill-will, he left his work and did her behest.[1]

A man was uprooting some whins in a field he was reclaiming. Gillan asked him to desist. On his refusal, she said, "Deil blast your fingers!" Later the man had his fingers blown away by the bursting of a charge of gunpowder with which he was trying to remove some rock from the same piece of ground.

She lived on the bounty of her neighbours and only passed away at the close of 1900.

Within the last two or three years I have conversed with an aged parishioner, a landsman all his days, a man both in position and intelligence above the average, who, in a quiet hour, professed his firm belief in the witch's power and in confirmation related his own experience. One begins to realise the truth of Sir James Frazer's words: "We should deceive ourselves if we imagined that the belief in witchcraft is even now dead in the mass of the people. On the contrary there is ample evidence to show that it only hibernates under the chilling influence of rationalism, and that it would start into active life if that influence were ever

[1] For information about this witch I am indebted to Mr. James Will, New Pitsligo.

seriously relaxed. The truth seems to be that to this day the peasant remains a pagan and savage at heart: his civilisation is merely a thin veneer which the hard knocks of life soon abrade, exposing the solid core of paganism and savagery below." [1] At the last burning of the Clavie at Burghead a small boy was overheard to say to another, "Na, I winna gie ye a bittie o' ma clavie stick. It wad brak ma luck." [2]

[1] Balder, I, viii f. [2] Cameron, A Highland Chapbook, 65.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

The Horseman's Word.

A phenomenon in the North-East which had much in common with the magic art was the giving of the horseman's word. Amongst farm servants even down to a generation ago there was much talk about what the horseman's word could accomplish. It could arrest a horse on the road and no man could make it budge. It could make a horse come to the possessor of the word, though he were miles away. It could make a woman follow him wherever he liked. A slight touch or tug at her apron was sufficient. It could set fire to a pair of horses without their being burned. It could make a plough plough a rig without man or horse. To the horseman's word was also attributed the fact that a man in the Skene district made a pair of horses cross the Loch without sinking an inch in the water. To the same word, bestowed upon a woman somewhere up Deeside, was ascribed the awful "clodding" she raised about the farm town, "a clodding" which only ceased after an extraordinary meeting of horsemen had been convened to stop it.

A secret ritual of initiation took place down to the close of last century, but in the later years, the work of initiating the lads fell into the hands of the glib-tongued, who made it an occasion for a drunken frolic. In its better days the rite of initiation, as with all secret ceremonies, was the great event in the horseman's life. It took place in the barn or "laft." The hour fixed was between eleven o'clock at night and one o'clock in the morning. The novice had to bring with him a loaf of bread, a bottle of whisky and a candle. He was blind-folded. There was a court

of four: the altar was the bushel pressed hard upon a sack of corn, with its bottom uppermost. "Hold up your hand," said the master of ceremonies, "and say after me . . ." which the novitiate did. One important question put was "fat are ye needin' maist?" to which the correct answer was "mair licht." After much mock questioning and repetitions, the youth got a shake of "the auld chiel's hand." It was a stick covered with some sort of hairy skin. The horseman's word was "Both in one," meaning there was to be complete harmony between the man and the horse he was working. The most brotherly thing taught was the duty of helping another horseman in need, on his giving a certain sign. Amongst charms for mastering horses were dead toads. The man with the horseman's word could accomplish marvels, but he sometimes employed charms as the medium.[1] The resemblance here to the witch initiations and to the powers claimed by the witches is remarkable. The "auld chiel's hand," i.e. the devil's, with its hairy covering, the solemn vows, the midnight hour suggest the meeting of a coven and the introduction of a novice. The belief in the power of the possessor of the word to reist a horse or to charm a woman into following him, is the same belief as is to be found in the witch cult. The toad, with the horseman as with the wizard, provided for his spells material of virtue. The claim that by means of the word a man could accomplish what in other traditions only the witch by her black art could achieve is noticeable in the story of the clodding, and the horses passing across the Loch of Skene. Witchcraft driven underground by church and state found its last lodgment amongst the more ignorant of the peasantry in rural solitudes. Just as the knowledge of the gillatrype dances spread from the witch assemblies and became popular with the least cultured classes of Morayshire, so much of the witch ritual found a lodgment and persisted amongst the horsemen of Aberdeenshire. The loaf of bread and bottle of whisky used in the initiation are modern but may be the representatives of something more ancient. The candle, the other part of the candidate's offering, appears in the witch ritual. In its last stages, the giving of the word was but a debasing orgy.

[1] Horne, Forgue, by a Herd Loon, 66-68; Scottish Notes and Queries, 2nd series, III (1903), 143, The Horseman's Word, by Old Buchan Ploughman.

The Miller's Word.

Another secret society, which at least partly seems to connect with the witch's art, is that of the miller's. Here, too, there is a password—the miller's word. The meetings were held by night in a kiln, where the tricks of the craft were taught. These places were regarded with awe. None would willingly approach them after darkness had fallen. A creature called the "Kiln carle" was believed to dwell in the "logie." It was of savage disposition—

> Kiln-carle teethless,
> Cum oot and mack me eesless.[1]

In the popular belief, the "millerts" had intercourse with the devil, who was present at the meetings of those possessed of the word. The miller was sometimes spoken of as "a man of skill," which meant a character not essentially different from a witch or charmer. The magic powers he exercised were specially associated with his own work. It was believed he could make his mill go without a "clap"—a clear indication of his alliance with the devil.[2] He could reist a mill, so that none could make it go. Old John Fraser of the Mill at Whitehill, New Deer, one night reisted his mill and then hid himself in the couples to see what would happen when the fairies came to use it. They turned on the water, but the machinery would not move. The little creatures examined every wheel and pinion. They could see nothing amiss. At last when they were about to depart, the miller came down and set the mill agoing without speaking a word.[3] The miller's word was like the horseman's. It indicated the possession of a power which was derived from alliance with Satan. That power might be exercised upon those beyond the sound of one's voice. It might become operative through a glance of the eye upon an immediate object. When this same John Fraser was in difficulty about milling an unexpectedly large quantity of grain, his neighbour, Legg, of the mill of Bruxie, also a man of skill, came to his rescue. He reisted his own mill, and took the speed of it with him. He did the same to the mill of Afforthie (Aquhorthie) and thus trebled the speed of the mill of Whitehill.[4]

[1] Gregor, Buchan Field Club, III, 127.
[2] Cf. Keith Kirk Session Records, 26th April, 1702.
[3] Milne, Myths, 22. [4] *Ibid.*, 27.

This transfer of power was "uncanny." The witch's power over nature has its counterpart in the miller's. Two smart youths, passing a mill in Donside and seeing a man standing beside it said: "I wonder if the mannie's a miller?" (meaning, had he the miller's word). They spat in the lade. Immediately there was a great commotion in the water. The mill was shaken and the machinery stopped. The miller accosted the strangers. "You scoundrels, ye've stopped my mill!" They exclaimed, "The mannie's a miller," and shook hands with him in token of camaraderie, for they too, of course, had the miller's word.[1]

In the church records the miller always appears suspect. Probably "the word" fortified him against the church and its ban. The millers, in all parts, seemed to persist in keeping their mills going on Sunday, after every other class of Sabbath-breaker had been brought to obedience. Not only did they seem conscious of an inner power which enabled them for long to defy the representatives of the new religion, it almost seemed as if they felt it a duty to be antagonistic to the new faith. On the other hand, the Church, at an early period, seemed to regard them as in league with the witch bands. At Elgin, in 1603, William Brander, miller at the mill of Whiteray, was accused of charming by witchcraft.[2]

Witches and Fairies.

In the records of the North-East and in the tales that for long were current, there is a mingling of fairies and witches. If their origin was widely different, that did not influence the popular mind. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the fairies have become part of Satan's kingdom. The witches traffic with fairyland. Andro Man had intimate relations with the Queen of Elphin, "a devilish spirit." Witch and fairy are interlocked: "Thou affirmis that the Queen of Elphen has a grip of all the craft, but Christ Sonday is the gudeman."[3] Further, Andro affirms that "the elves have shapes and clothes like men and have fair covered tables, and that they are but shadows, but are starker than men and that they have dancing when they please and the queen is very pleasant."[4] From

[1] Laing, Superstitions, 56.
[2] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 107.
[3] Sp. Misc., I, 121.
[4] *Ibid.*

Auldearn comes Gowdie's testimony: "I was in the Downie Hills, and got meat there from the Queen of Fairie more than I could eat. The Queen of Fairy is brawly clothed in white linen and in white and brown clothes."[1] These witnesses professed to be in alliance with Fairyland and its queen. They had access to this Province of Satan's kingdom. In fact, according to their evidence the orgies in Fairyland were very similar to the licentious rites of the witches themselves. "Ther wes elf bullis rowtting and skoylling up and downe thair, and affrighted me."[2]

At Elgin, in 1647, Janet Cowie, having been absent all night from her home and having only returned about four or five in the morning, her husband asked where she had been. She replied the fairy had taken her away to "Messindiu" where she had slept all night.[3] In 1684 it was reported at the Presbytery of Fordyce that Margaret Coutts, the noted charmer, professed acquaintance with the Fairy Courts.[4]

To witch and fairy are attributed like qualities and properties. Both are perilous to the mother in childbed. Either might steal the human babe and leave her own unthriving bantling. Both work havoc to horse or cattle, riding them by night and shooting at them their deadly bolts, the elf arrows of neolithic man. Both have the power of invisibility and of magic movement through the air. Both celebrate their merry revels at night. From both, the supreme hour of peril to mortals is at certain seasons such as Beltane eve, Midsummer eve, and Hallow eve.[5] The belief in fairies and witches, springing from very different sources, seems largely to have been fused together by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The witches were human beings who had their habitation above ground, and only by the exercise of their art were they able to transform themselves into other shapes and transport themselves to other worlds. The fairies, on the other hand, had their habitation under ground. They were invisible to mortal eye in ordinary circumstances. Only on special occasions and in certain conditions was it permitted to man to have intercourse with elves and elfland.

[1] Pitcairn, *op. cit.*, III, 604.
[2] *Ibid.*, 604.
[3] Cramond, Records of Elgin, II, 357.
[4] Cramond, Church and Churchyard of Fordyce, 22 f.
[5] MacCulloch, Folk-Lore, 32 (1921), 228 ff.

Magic and Religion.

The witch's art and nature religion may both have sprung from the same source in the misty past, but as we know them, there is a distinct cleavage. The witches constituted a priesthood. To them alone was entrusted the performance of the magical rites. Through them alone came the desired boons. In the worship of nature, the suppliant might bring his offering, make his petition and return home without the intervention of any intermediary. He might come to the spirit of the well, utter his orisons, and depart without the aid of priesthood. He might resort to the sacred fire and seek healing, aided in raising the sacred spark by neighbours only. The clavie knows no priestly caste. Rags might be placed on the sacred tree by the devotee, assured that his offering was accepted and the disease transferred. It was a simple faith transmitted from generation to generation, not by any organised caste, but from father to son and from mother to daughter. It persisted, in spite of the edicts of the Church, because it seemed to meet the universal need of the human heart by mediating divine aid in the hour of man's extremity. The man who knew not God as Father, who would have had difficulty in grasping the thought if he had been taught, believed that virtue flowed from the healing waters and power came to his stricken body as he followed the customs of his fathers. The nature worship, of which we have found many traces in the North-Eastern corner of Scotland, was on the whole beneficent in its effects. The witch cult, while it did bring with it some knowledge of the healing art, was vitiated by the frequency with which that knowledge was turned to evil purpose. The witch, from her earliest appearance in history, has seemed to have been up against constituted authority and established religion. Invariably the witch's movement was against the course of the sun—"widdershins." The Llama monk whirls his praying machine in the same direction as the sun. The Moslem makes his circuit of the Kaaba following the course of the same orb. The pilgrim at the holy well circumambulates sunways. In Orkney at the walk after the marriage, the course is set in consonance with the sun's movement. At death, when there is a perambulation of the churchyard or of some sacred spot in the vicinity, it follows the same rule. But the witch goes

against the sun. She is a rebel against the accepted order of the old nature religion. Later she seems here and there to have absorbed into her ritual some elements from the worship of fire or water. A counter-charmer at Corgarff, to cure a cow deprived of its milk, kindled the needfire and burned it under the cow.[1] At the ritual at Melshach, the witch was seen employing the water of the sacred well. It was only natural that she should add to her armoury weapons that were otherwise falling into desuetude, but to which, owing to a venerable history, a certain potency and sanctity were still attributed by the peasantry.

Less than half a century ago children sat by the fireside in the quiet of the winter's evening and there listened to tales of witches and kelpies and ghostly apparitions. Stories of "feart" places and haunted spots were burned into the minds and hearts of childhood, and for long cast a shadow over human existence. The late Rev. J. G. Michie of Dinnet speaks out of his own experience and it was the experience of many. "Every bush was suspected of harbouring some malignant spirit, and every rustle among the branches sent a shock through my nervous system from the effects of which, in spite of my philosophy, I sometimes feel I have not yet quite recovered. Even now I cannot pass through a dark wood late at night without recalling these boyish experiences, and

> Glowran' round wi' anxious care
> Lest bogle catch me unaware." [2]

If this feeling animated a man of culture, one can understand something of the eerie existence of those whose minds were not widened by the teachings of philosophy and science and whose hearts were untouched by the divine love. Life was full of fears and forebodings. It was surrounded by mystery on every side—the unseen exuded terrors. In man's extremity, he resorted to the old nature rites, finding in them not only a joyous break in the weary round of existence but a reinforcement of his spirit in the warfare he was constantly waging against the harbingers of pestilence, sickness, and death.

[1] Folk-Lore Journal, VII, 282. [2] Michie, Deeside Tales, 181.

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